

UNIVERSAL  
LIBRARY



119 872

UNIVERSAL  
LIBRARY







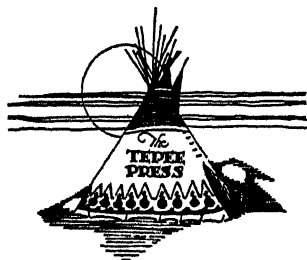




# Where Goes The River

*By*

Albert S. Tousley



*Publishers*

The Tepee Press

Iowa City, Iowa

■

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

Copyright 1928 by Albert S. Tousley

Printed in the U. S. A.

■

# Where Goes The River



*A canoe trip from the source of the  
Mississippi River to the Gulf of  
Mexico, twenty-five hundred miles,  
in which its physical features, his-  
tory, legends, and people are*

PORTRAYED WITH WORD AND PICTURE

BY

ALBERT S. TOUSLEY

DECORATIONS

BY

GUSTAVE WIGREN

-

This  
volume  
is dedicated  
to

EUNICE ALBERTA LOCKHART TOUSLEY

who,  
through the kindness  
of fate, I know as  
MY MOTHER

-

Upon  
this page  
is expressed  
deep appreciation  
for the encouragement,  
labor and friendship of my  
companions on this twenty-five  
hundred mile journey to the sea.

WILLIAM O. FORSELL  
who would have been a Viking ten centuries ago . . .

RICHARD STORRS PATTEE  
no more gallant Indian ever wielded paddle . . .

ALLEN C. SULERUD  
who became a Norwegian coureur-de-bois . . .

*and to*

‘THE CHARLES H. CURLEY OF ST. PAUL’  
because it bore the brunt of everything . . .





## *Log of the Journey*

Before Embarking on the Adventure.....	xi
Once Upon A Time.....	xv
Chapter One. The decision to go is made.....	1
Chapter Two. We leave Douglas Lodge and camp on the North Arm of Lake Itasca.....	5
Chapter Three. From Lake Itasca sixty-five miles to Bemidji.....	11
Chapter Four. Across Lake Bemidji, through Cass Lake to Winnibigoshish Dam.....	23
Chapter Five. From Lake Winnibigoshish to Grand Rapids.....	36
Chapter Six. From Grand Rapids one hundred and twenty-five miles to Aitkin.....	43
Chapter Seven. One hundred and thirty miles from Aitkin to St. Cloud.....	49
Chapter Eight. St. Cloud to Minneapolis, seventy miles..	55
Chapter Nine. Minneapolis, St. Anthony Falls, Fort Snelling, Pike Island, Minnesota River, Mendota to St. Paul.....	61
Chapter Ten. St. Paul to Red Wing, fifty miles.....	71
Chapter Eleven. Sixty-five miles through Lake Pepin to Winona.....	78
Chapter Twelve. Winona, Minnesota, to Lansing, Iowa..	87
Chapter Thirteen. Lansing to Prairie du Chien and on to Dubuque.....	96
Chapter Fourteen. Dubuque to Moline, Rock Island and Davenport.....	106
Chapter Fifteen. Davenport to Nauvoo, one hundred and fifteen miles.....	116
Chapter Sixteen. Through Keokuk Dam to Quincy and Hannibal.....	125
Chapter Seventeen. Downstream to Alton, past the mouth of the Illinois River.....	136
Chapter Eighteen. From Alton past the Missouri mouth to St. Louis.....	145


---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

Chapter Nineteen. From Cahokia, opposite St. Louis, to Chester.....	152
Chapter Twenty. On to Cairo, fourteen hundred miles from the source... ..	162
Chapter Twenty-one. The mouth of the Ohio to New Madrid.....	171
Chapter Twenty-two. Leaving New Madrid, we make Caruthersville and Memphis, one hundred and fifty <sup>th</sup> five miles downstream.....	179
Chapter Twenty-Three. Memphis to Knowlton Post Office, Arkansas, one hundred and forty miles.....	194
Chapter Twenty-Four. Past the mouth of the White and Arkansas rivers to Greenville, Mississippi.....	205
Chapter Twenty-Five. Greenville to Vicksburg and Mound, one hundred and twenty miles.....	216
Chapter Twenty-Six. Leaving Vicksburg we camp below Natchez.....	227
Chapter Twenty-Seven. Natchez Island Towhead past the mouth of Old River or Red River.....	236
Chapter Twenty-Eight. Angola and Baton Rouge to Point Clair.....	244
Chapter Twenty-Nine. We visit Donaldsonville and come within sight of New Orleans.....	252
Chapter Thirty. New Orleans, "America's Most Interesting City.".....	261
Chapter Thirty-One. Ninety miles below New Orleans to Pilot Town, just above Head of Passes.....	271
Chapter Thirty-Two. Out onto the Gulf of Mexico to learn Where Goes The River.....	287

## *Lines in Appreciation of—*

HE author wishes to express his appreciation to many persons throughout the Mississippi Valley and beyond, who aided him in writing this volume. To Solon J. Buck, superintendent of The Minnesota Historical Society, for his kindness in reading the manuscript dealing with Minnesota and Wisconsin. To Professor Theodore C. Blegen, assistant superintendent of The Minnesota Historical Society, where much work was done, and to the staff of the society, the author voices his gratefulness for many courtesies.

“Thank you” is extended to Joseph Schafer, superintendent of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin; Edgar R. Harlan, curator of the Memorial, Art and Historical Department of Iowa; the Illinois Historical Society; the Missouri State Historical Society; Mrs. Jouett Taylor Cannon, secretary of the Kentucky State Historical Society; A. P. Foster, archivist and assistant librarian of the Department of Education of Tennessee; Arkansas History Commission, and Dunbar Rowland of the Mississippi Historical Society.

The author is deeply grateful to the Honorable W. O. Hart of New Orleans, but for whose painstaking efforts he would have been unable to secure much Louisiana information. Mr. Hart personally assisted and was aided by these Louisianans: Mr. Edward Rightor, New Orleans; Isaac D. Wall, Baton Rouge; E. S. Muse, St. Francisville; John Dymond, Jr., New Orleans; J. V. Chenet, Mount Airy; James H. Gilfoil, Jr., Lake Providence, and L. Robert Rivarde, Hahnville Post Office.

For furnishing him with information about the river, the Mississippi River Commission, and for reading the manuscript to insure accurate treatment of engineering features, the author is indebted to Charles H. West, Greenville, Mississippi. He also expresses appreciation for the cooperation received before the canoe trip, while it was in progress, and since then, from Colonel Charles L. Potter, then president of the Mississippi River Commission; Brigadier General T. Q. Ashburn, chairman and executive of the Inland Waterways

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

Corporation; M. G. Barnes, Chief Engineer, Division of Waterways, Department of Public Works and Buildings of Illinois; the Honorable Oscar E. Keller, former Congressman of St. Paul, and the United States Department of Interior, United States Department of Agriculture, the Adjutant General's office, the United States Army Engineers and the Mississippi Valley Association.

The author expresses personal appreciation for personal kindnesses of the following: Judge J. P. Young, Memphis; Chaplain Frank C. Rideout, U. S. A., Fort Snelling; Dr. O. E. Denny, Medical Officer in charge of the United States Marine Hospital Number 66 at Carville; the Reverend R. Deye, Wittenberg, Missouri; G. Walter Barr, Keokuk; Harry Downer, Davenport; Lieutenant Colonel G. J. Jenks, Commandant, Rock Island Arsenal, and Mrs. Martha L. Hemenway, Lansing, Iowa.

To all of these and a host of others, the author is indebted, and offers his sincerest appreciation—to the farmers on whose land the expedition camped, especially those two from whom we appropriated rhubarb and watermelons, friends at whose homes we visited, those who aided us in portages, the steamboat captains and pilots with whom we talked and from whom we learned more of the river than books may tell, the W. G. Coyle warehouse of New Orleans for bringing our most treasured possession, *The Charles H. Curley of St. Paul*, safely back to *The Crescent City*, the Dock Board of New Orleans, to the scores who gave us information and encouragement, to Governor Theodore Christianson and Mayor Arthur Nelson of our home state and city, who, unsolicited, gave us letters of introduction to other executives and who appointed us "ambassadors without portfolio" to the Valley of the World, to Sheriff Earle Brown of Hennepin county, Minnesota, who vouched for our respectability and concluded with the words, "In the event of Mr. Tousley's meeting with misfortune of any kind, please communicate with this office at our expense."

To all of the above and to scores of others who, by words of encouragement, cheer, or greeting, made the way easier, reserving unkind feelings only for the mosquitoes and the Point Clair ants, the author expresses his gratefulness and appreciation and acknowledges his debt to these various representatives of the Mississippi Valley for their kindness, assistance and humanity.

## *Before Embarking on the Adventure*



THIS is not the dream of a rabid idealist, the scientific accretions of a savant, or publicity brief for any person, organization or locality, but the impressions of a young reporter who set out in a little red canoe to learn the answer to the question—"Where Goes The River?" Where does it go and why? What does it do? What does it see? Who has traversed it? How has it affected people? What of its history? What of its romance and its foibles, facts, fancies and fables?

What I have to say is not merely traffic in words. The Mississippi is the nation's river, but this is my book about it. To have taken the trip without having seen myself in relation to the river and the valley would have been to have missed one of the great joys of the journey. Now to write about it without a feeling of possession is impossible. The river takes for its own all who associate with it; yet those same persons feel a sole ownership in the river. It is not presumptuous, I believe, for one who has traversed the Father of Waters by the most enchanting means possible, a silent, slender canoe, to write such a book as I here present. The journey lasted all summer: all or part of sixty-five days actually were spent on the river.

Almost all of my life I have lived where I could reach its banks within a few minutes, see it from the windows of my home, and feel myself an integral part of the river and its valley. After toiling over its entire course, I have more than an inkling of its meaning, meandering and mission. I know its moods and moments, loves and hates, beauties and terrors, smiles and frowns. I have ridden thousands of miles upon it in canoe, steamboat, tug, motorboat: above it in aircraft; along its banks by automobile and bicycle. I have walked hundreds of miles beside it, entranced by its majesty, mystery, dignity, and supreme wisdom. My journey by canoe, that half-brother of the crescent moon, was the fulfillment of an ever-growing desire to learn "Where Goes The River."

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

When anyone, flushed with the beauties of life, reminds others of its glories, they say he is young and will learn. Still, I had wanted to remain a youth always. To dream is a trait of youth as well as of age. The only way to feed our dreamworld is to make some of our dreams come true, so we may give birth to new dreams and retain our youth. Now I shall not mind growing old, for I have memories of this river, about which as years roll by, I shall weave more dreams.

I wanted to associate with the spirits of Indians and explorers, to traverse the river whereon had gone great personalities, to be one of the few who had known all of the river and loved it. Always I had wanted to know if force is all there is in the world, if we may ever be relatively free from it. I learned that the greatest force in America is this river, and that within oneself there is freedom from practically everything. One who has taken this journey need never bicker over creeds and sects: this river becomes to him part of religion, an apostle itself of God.

I do not know just what I expected to find en route or at River's End, but I know that I felt the pulse of the Valley of the World and held my breath when it skipped an occasional beat. I learned that one may analyze companions, know their minutest fault, and still find them overwhelmingly worth while. I know the ecstasy of solitude at daybreak, the beauty of a waking city, the solemnity of nightfall, the heat of noon-day suns, the gripping fear of an unexpected whirl, cutting banks, the thrill of breasting waves that threatened to crush our craft. I know the pain that comes from red sunsets too exquisite to discuss or even understand, and the perfect rhythm of bodies ceaselessly swinging as paddles bend to their tasks.

There is a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, containing in addition to fabled gold, the rewards due one who has loved the labor of the search. At river's end, in the days of the ancients, perhaps we should have been swept off the map, like chips into a whirlpool, never to return. But in this newer day I come back to tell the tale of the river as I know it. What others have seen the Father of Waters from source to mouth? What others know it as a living thing? What others have felt its burning heats, chilling rains, mosquitoes, ants, fatigues,

---

## *B E F O R E   E M B A R K I N G*

---

love, hate, joy, delirium? My heart and hand meet theirs in silent understanding. To the others I offer this book as an explanation, interpretation and as faithful a portrayal of the majestic Mississippi as is possible to the mind and heart of the author.

ALBERT S. TOUSLEY.

*October, 1928.*





## Once Upon a Time

**L**ET'S run away and kill Indians, or be cowboys or pirates or something," suggested one of our "gang." We sat by the council fire in a sheltered nook in our stone quarry "rondeywoo."

"Where would we go?" asked one of the timid souls that is to be found in every "gang," even as bad as ours must have been.

"Where?" I replied with worldliness possible only at the age of nine. "Where's the only place to go? Down the old Miss'ssippi! Build a raft and float clean to the Gulf o' Mexico."

Those were the days when the metamorphosis from Sitting Bull to Buffalo Bill to Napoleon or Peary was accomplished simply by the suggestion, when copper pennies were pieces of eight, when "girruls" were looked down upon as something that told our mothers we hurt them when they took part in games in which they were not wanted, when cookies or bread and jam were contraband better than casks of wine or ship's cargo of silk and jewels. Our peace pipes were hollowed acorns; our tobacco was cornsilk or dried sumac berries. The "enemy" was Peter Schletty, the school janitor, who later assumed the form of a desirable fellow citizen.

Ours was the "Quarry Gang," with headquarters in a great quarry near our homes. We were called "Hill Rats," for we lived on the hill above the "Flat Rats," who dwelt on the lowlands near the river. Frequently, like the Scotch Highlanders in that romantic country beyond the seas, we descended upon them to administer much needed rebukes in payment of sundry imper-tinences, real or fancied. Planning this day by the fire, we cast the die. We would run away and sail down the Mississippi. We repaired to our homes to gather food, clothing and supplies. Several hours later the "gang" reappeared at "headquarters." Some looked sheepish, some angry, others appeared relieved. Several had some of the appurtenances for the journey. Their mothers were downtown doing the Saturday shopping. Of those who returned empty handed, I was one. My explanation was indeed a woeful tale.

"Well, fellas, my mother says I can't go. She says we're going to have baked beans and Boston brown bread tonight. I have to study my Sunday school lesson afterwards and take a bath. So I guess it's all off for me today."

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

*Several mothers had found their sons preparing to embark as members of the crew of the pirate craft. Strangely, it seemed to us, we were forbidden to go. Most of us were past nine; one was eleven. But the voyage was not permitted in spite of plans and plots. So "Chick" La Bross, Lyle and Floyd Mellen, "Larry" Landers, "Polly" Nelson, "Fritzie" Marlow, Tom Carey, Johnny Sweeney, "Bobby" Belland with half a dozen others (Where are they all now?) and myself, climbed to the "lookout" of the quarry, and gazed out over the flats of St. Paul to where the river threads its way past smoke-greyed sandstone bluffs, then sweeps southward in a glorious curve toward the southland.*

*"Some day," I murmured, half aloud, half to myself, a promise and a vow, "I'm going to find out where that river goes, and I'm going with it—clean to the Gulf!"*





*View on Bayou Long, which is reached through Plaquemine lock by following Plaquemine Bayou, on the route from the Mississippi River to the Atchafalaya River, and from there on through the Teche country, the "Garden Spot of Louisiana."*

## CHAPTER I

*"Quae sursum volo videre"  
I fain would see what lies beyond.*



FROM the city streets at mid-morning floated raucous calls of newsboys, crying, "Uxtry, noon edition." In the editorial rooms of The Minneapolis Journal there was a lull, a brief breath before the rush to make the early mail and home editions. April! Already days were hot, days downtown when it seemed there was no out of doors, no "great open spaces," no quiet pools where fish lay in wait for unsuspecting Bass-Orenos, no hilltops upon which to lie and watch the world.

Yet there was. The day before Neil Swanson, assistant managing editor, tall and rosy, a driving journalist fond of work, fresh air and his son, had come in with the youngster and mentioned a glorious walk along the river road. "Good Old Flo" Brown was planning a vacation out west. Florence Lehmann of "Women's Activities," was trying to decide between the seashore and the mountains. Tommy Phelps was leaving the real estate department for a trip around the world. Ford Wilkins soon was to start for a position in the Orient. All but Neil Swanson two years before had been classmates at the University of Minnesota. All had itchy feet. The "red gods" had bewitched us: the "Call of the Wild," or spring, was in our blood.

I had reached that stage in spring fever when the mere thought of things and persons was burdensome. Though physicians would have declared me healthy and normal, letters dropped out of words, fell to the floor and made faces at me, pictures squinted into weird futuristic designs. While the winding road, the west, the seashore and mountains lured the others, a perennial longing gnawed at my vitals. The whole world winked a welcome to Tom, geisha girls and the Orient beckoned to Ford, but a river filled my waking thoughts, haunted my dreams.

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

Here copy must be edited, heads written, proof read, pages made up. Harry Wakefield, Sunday Editor, wanted all features scrupulously gone over to insure excluding objectionable matter. George Adams, Managing Editor, had just ordered a bottle of milk and glass substituted in an Andy Gump strip for a bottle of beer and stein. The printers always needed copy. There was no time to ponder the riddle of the universe or dream. Good men and true were they all, but like myself, too busy filling their jobs to enjoy such a temptation as the one now constantly before me.

"All of my life I had wondered 'Where Goes the River?'" Born in St. Paul, I had been reared within sight of the Mississippi. From the attic windows of my home I had countless times watched the river sweeping by the grey-white bluffs, bound for southern seas. From the two buildings where I had attended grammar school and from my high school windows, the Father of Waters could be seen. My university days were spent on its banks. I had canoed parts of it, churned its waters in speedboats, danced on class excursions aboard boats floating on it, and had swum across it and back many times.

Now I longed to canoe its entire course, to start at the utmost source and traverse the two thousand five hundred miles to the Gulf of Mexico. It had been done only once, in 1881. The yearning had grown with years: it was almost a complex. In a few years there might be a wife. I could not imagine one complacently approving such an expedition. Childless marriages are not nearly so common as it is thought, even among college graduates. I saw "Junior" asking me to take him canoeing, and heard him say, "Where does 'at river go?" That settled it! I flung the gauntlet and pulled the trigger. No son of mine would ask twice "Where Goes The River?" I pictured myself as father, grandfather, great-grandfather, and great-great-grandfather, tellingsucceeding generations of canoeists, oarsmen and *coureurs-de-bois* about the parent stream of the continent.

The effects of the announcement that I was going to canoe the entire length of the Mississippi were many. Mother said she would practice fainting gracefully to be ready when the day came. Father could not understand how anyone would



(1) The farthest and ultimate source of the Mississippi River, Hernando de Soto Lake, although for all practical purposes, Lake Itasca is the approximate source. This picture also shows the first house on the river, De Soto Cabin, and the first island, Brower Island.

(2) Looking down Southwest Arm of Lake Itasca, to where Nicollet's Infant Mississippi, which comes from Hernando de Soto Lake, enters Lake Itasca.

(3) The author the day before the start of the canoe trip, in Chambers Creek, which carries the waters of Elk Lake, the "true source" heralded by Glazier, into Lake Itasca.





(1) "Bill" in Itasca State Park the day the start was made.

(2) The author, the only person alive who has canoed the entire two thousand five hundred miles of the Mississippi River.

(3) William O. Forssell, "Bill", taking a trial spin on Southeast Arm of Lake Itasca, Decoration Day, on the evening of which the start was made.

(4) Bill and the author, in the stern, leaving Lake Itasca, May 31, 1915, with Bill ready to follow the river to Aitkin, three hundred and ten miles downstream.

---

## PREPARATIONS ARE MADE

---

give up a good job to risk his life in some canvas and a few pieces of wood, but wished he could go too. Sister wanted to know where she could send cookies. My brother knew that I was suffering from sunstroke, but threatened dire things if I spent less than a week with him at Cairo. Harry Wakefield said I ought to have told him sooner, then gave me letters of introduction to his friends en route. The brethren at the fraternity house varied in their comments. One wanted more "white water," and narrated hair-raising escapes, two of which may have been true. Others preferred summer resorts, mountain climbing or hiking. For some it was too long: for others not exciting enough. For, me, realization of a lifelong dream. Some suggested a psychopathic ward: others thought it great. A certain young lady who was yet unaware I had made her a great-great-grandmother, objected, but was bribed by promises of a trip to Niagara Falls.

Dozens tried to sell me equipment: one friend offered to loan an old shotgun. Everybody contributed suggestions and advice. Had I taken one-tenth of the medicine advised I would have needed a flatboat. One morbid soul began to send clippings of drownings and canoe accidents. Later I mailed him postals of hospitals with "Wish you were here" inscribed. April and May wore away. I wrote letters, asked questions, collected duffle, gathered information, studied maps, read books, and walked the river banks of the Twin Cities, alone, watching the waters hastening Gulfwards.

This was to be my orgy of romance, trip of conquest, summer of exploration, my great adventure. Friends nicknamed me "De Soto." In my dreams I was more than that. I was Leif Ericson, son of Eric the Red, setting out with my Vikings to discover Greenland and Iceland, Cortez about to conquer the Incas and annex the golden riches of Peru; Ponce de Leon in Florida, seeking the Fountain of Eternal Youth. I was Columbus after a new route to the Indies, Magellan ready to girdle the globe, Peary starting for the North Pole, Amundsen in the Antarctic.

What if I really were only a young journalist setting out to traverse the world's greatest river? What if I was backed by no fighting force, no men in armor, no strongboxes filled

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

with the monies of royal treasuries, nothing but my slender bank account, a strong back, desire and a frail canoe? Mine was to be the battle with the elements, mine the achievement or failure! The challenge of the stream was there! The river awaited. Romance! Adventure! These and the fascination of the unknown drew me on. Every mile of the Mississippi's hundreds beckoned. I could not be heedless to such a call.



*"I had reached that stage in spring fever—"*

## CHAPTER II

### *We make the start, visit Schoolcraft Island and camp in Itasca State Park.*



NO BAND was playing for Bill Forssell and myself as we stepped into our canoe, *The Charles H. Curley of St. Paul*, and pushed away from the dock at Douglas Lodge, Lake Itasca, an hour before sunset, Decoration Day, May 30, 1925. We were off, on the first leg of my quest to learn "Where Goes The River," on a journey that was to carry me the entire length of the Mississippi River, barring death, disaster or distraction. No chorus of "Ahs" and "Ohs" rose from the crowd that had gathered to witness the take-off. None remarked, "They're off!" None fired a gun, no handkerchief dropped to show that the start had been officially timed. Mother, true to the heritage of her sex, asked if we had forgotten anything. Someone shouted, "Don't tip over." My nephew let out the loudest whoop I have ever heard from a two-year old, three cheers crowded into one.

Bill turned to me, and in classic words said, "Come on, kid, let's go!" The battle was on, a fight that was to last all summer, against wind, wave, shoal, human frailty and the course of events. Go we did. It mattered little that the thermometer had registered 92-degrees this memorable Memorial Day, that shadows were lengthening over the lake, that we were soft after an easy winter indoors. Youth surged through our veins: adventure lay before us. The air was the only wine needed to intoxicate us: unknown Mississippi River miles stretching around countless bends the only incentive needed to urge us on. Hardships, dangers, in the hazy distance, were added lures.

Down the Southeast arm of Lake Itasca we paddled, to Schoolcraft Island, three miles from Douglas Lodge. The island, pivotal point of a three-winged lake, is named for Henry Rowe Schoolcraft. From the tip of any of the arms to the tip of either of the others is five miles. The arms are about

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

an eighth of a mile wide. From Schoolcraft Island the arms extend southeast, southwest, and, the one from which the Mississippi flows, north. We pulled our canoe up on shore and tied it, an unnecessary precaution: scarcely a ripple ruffled the lake; only a faint breeze stirred. This two-acre island rises twenty feet above the lake and is adorned with birch, poplar, pine, willow and basswood.

Here the Schoolcraft expedition camped July 13, 1832. Schoolcraft is credited with the first authentic discovery of Lake Itasca as the chief source of the Mississippi River, though other white men were there before him. To all practical purposes Lake Itasca is the source of the Mississippi. Hernando de Soto Lake is the ultimate source.

Joseph Nicolas Nicolet, the French-American scientist who traced the Mississippi to its ultimate source, encamped here four nights beginning August 29, 1836. He spent the days mapping and exploring the surrounding country. Nicolet was an expert watchmaker, mathematician, astronomer, explorer and writer. Julius Chambers, representative of the *New York World*, spent a night here in the spring of 1872, before his *Dolly Varden* expedition, named for his canoe, started for the Gulf. The *Rob Roy* party, headed by A. H. Siegfried of the *Louisville Courier-Journal*, pitched camp on this green gem in 1879. Here Captain Willard Glazier spent the night of July 22, 1881, the day before his "discovery" of Elk Lake.

Enthusiastic onslaughts of mosquitoes reminded us that night would fall upon us with a thud unless we hurried to camp. Day withdrew: quiet enveloped the lake. The birds ceased commenting on events of the day. The wind retired to its home in the far country. The waters placidly became more placid: only ripples created by the canoe stirred the lead-colored sheet. The beavers alone, sporting at their evening games, broke the quiet. We would propel the canoe close to one of those busy little animals. It would discover us, and, diving, would slap its tail with a crack that sounded like the report of a gun. From a dozen places crackling sounds would resound, revealing that brother and sister beavers had been swimming unnoticed nearby.

---

## ORIGIN OF 'ITASCA'

---

"Ever hear how this lake was named?" I asked Bill. He said he imagined, as do most persons, that Itasca was an Indian name.

"Schoolcraft and the Reverend W. T. Boutwell, one of the party in 1832, named the lake before they saw it," I said. "While canoeing along Lake Superior en route to the source, Schoolcraft asked his companion the Latin and Greek definitions of true source or headwaters of a river. Boutwell's classic education lately had been neglected, but finally he selected the two best words he remembered, *Veritas*, 'truth' and *Caput*, 'head.' Schoolcraft puzzled some time, then took the last of one and the first of the others, forming 'Itasca.' "

Darkness had fallen when we reached the tourist camp at the north end of the lake. My brother-in-law, Charles E. Boughton, Jr., and myself, had pitched camp here several days before to fish and explore. In the tent, after our paddle from Schoolcraft Island, I heaved exulting sighs. The trip



*"The beavers alone, sporting at their evening games, broke the quiet."*

actually was started: the great adventure begun! What sights ahead! What historic waters to traverse! What romance, what sport for the jaunty little red canoe and its occupants! Night engulfed us. Animals, birds and insects made faint sleepy sounds. A late wind rustled the leaves. Across the lake came sounds of a tree crashing to earth. Night time, but I did not want to sleep. Only once could one embark on such a journey. I wanted to ponder over it, talk about it.

"Just think Bill," I said joyously, "We're near the source of a river that for two hundred and fifty years has been a fabulous stream, for two hundred years a boundary, for one hundred and fifty years the upper reaches of which have

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

been the object of exploration, for one hundred years the artery. . . . ."

"And tonight makes you forget that we have to get up at dawn tomorrow," interrupted Bill.

"Yes," I agreed, expounding facts that had whirled in my head for weeks. "Here we are one hundred and fifty miles west of Lake Superior, one hundred and twenty-five south of Canada, and five hundred and thirty river miles above St. Paul. To reach the Gulf we must pass through ten states. What a . . . . ."

"And several thousand miles from where you'll be if you don't let me sleep," Bill reminded me.

"Yes," and I heedlessly continued, "More than one and one-fourth million square miles, forty-one per cent of the United States, is drained by the Mississippi River system. What a valley! Within its confines are gold, silver, coal, iron, diamonds, bauxite or aluminum ore, oil, natural gas . . . . ."

"So I've noticed," Bill interjected dryly.

I subsided long enough to take a mental trip around the edge of the valley, beginning at the head of a rockrimmed plateau, where lakes, hills, springs and muskegs abound. We follow the margin of the valley south and west to Brown's Valley, Minnesota. There rain of one shower falling on Lakes Big Stone and Traverse, in time reaches both the Gulf of Mexico and the Hudson Bay. We go on, past the northwest corner of North Dakota, bite out a piece of Canada, to the Rocky Mountain cradle where the Milk River bursts forth from a spring, later to become the Missouri. Following the backbone of the continent through Leadville, Colorado, and Santa Fe, New Mexico, we cross Texas between Dallas and Denison to Shreveport and the Gulf. Beginning at the Gulf, we angle up to Decatur, near Muscle Shoals at Florence, Alabama. A zig-zag course up to the crest of the Appalachians takes us within ten miles of Lake Erie. We pass between Lake Erie and Lake Chautauqua, drop southwestward to Crestline, Ohio, thence on to Fort Wayne, Indiana, past Michigan to within sight of Chicago. Turning north, we miss Green Bay and the Fox River valley, continue into northern Wisconsin, nibble at northern Michigan through several Wis-

---

## “HIRE A HALL”

---

consin River tributaries, miss Duluth by a few miles and cross Minnesota to the starting point.

“Bill,” I began again, “We shall travel the waters of De Soto, La Salle, Tonty, Joliet, waters that have been traversed by coureurs-de-bois and packet boats, waters that have borne furs and cotton, and passed beneath southern skies and northern lights. I see this infant stream struggling to grandeur. I see rapids, shallows, purple bluffs through midsummer haze. I see sandbars, sweeping bends, and at the end . . .”

“Hey there, if you have to give a speech, hire a hall and charge admission.”

It was the voice of a nearby tourist. Thereafter we assiduously avoided tourist camps. My voice had risen in my enthusiasm. A snort under the blankets. Then, “Yes,” very politely, “at the end?” I maintained a dignified aloofness, but managed in the process of settling down to inflict several jabs into Bill’s ribs.

In a few moments—quiet—then sleep.

The previous day my brother-in-law and myself had paddled up Southeast arm and down Southwest arm of Lake Itasca, up Chambers Creek, portaged around a little dam and gained Elk Lake. On the west side of Chambers Creek is Morrison Hill, named for William Morrison, believed to have been the first white man to view these waters, in 1804. The creek is named for Julius Chambers.

From the end of Southwest arm, we followed Nicolet’s Infant Mississippi to the ultimate source of the Mississippi. I prefer to believe with the poet that all rivers have their source in the clouds, and that thus the Mississippi is linked with the world. But scientifically the extremity of the Father of Waters is Hernando de Soto Lake at the end of Nicolet’s Infant Mississippi, where little springs sending rivulets into it are the remotest sources.

Before Schoolcraft gave Lake Itasca its present name, the waters were known as “Omoskos” or “Omushkos,” Elk Lake in Chippewa, Lac la Biche in French. After Schoolcraft’s discovery, the nearby smaller lake was named Elk. Julius Chambers came to the wilderness for his health, made the official discovery of Elk Lake and was the first man to traverse the



---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

entire length of the Mississippi. He canoed in the *Dolly Varden* to Quincy, Illinois, where he boarded the *Belle of La Crosse* for St. Louis. He continued to New Orleans on the *James Howard*, there taking an ocean liner for New York.

The generation before ours was greatly stirred by the "discovery" of Captain Willard Glazier, who claimed that Elk Lake, which he modestly renamed "Glazier Lake," was the source of the Mississippi. Glazier appeared at Lake Itasca July 22, 1881, equipped, no doubt, with watch, knife, compass and canoe, remained overnight, chanced upon Elk Lake, renamed it, explored no more, ignored previous maps, and ballyhooed his way down the Mississippi. Since his trip, his claims have been proven preposterous. His one possible achievement was being the first man to canoe the entire Mississippi, but some maintain they saw him riding steamboats between Memphis and Vicksburg.

Jacob V. Brower made an extended investigation for the Minnesota Historical Society, later publishing a book proving Glazier an imposter. H. B. Harrower, an eastern writer, also wrote an exposé of Glazier's claims. Their writings proved: Elk Lake was not the primal reservoir; it did not furnish most of the water of Lake Itasca; Glazier plagiarized Schoolcraft's writings, stealing item for item his weather charts; that half a dozen white men had visited Elk Lake before Glazier; that Chambers was the first man to completely traverse the river.

Now on this Decoration Day night we were encamped on the shores of Itasca, ready to start down the river. We were on the edge of Itasca State Park, a state forest and game and fish preserve. It contains the primal reservoir of the river which arises in a still fairly wild, heavily wooded, lacustrine basin. The lake is fourteen hundred and fifty-seven feet above sea level, and two thousand five hundred miles from the extreme end of South Pass.

If we stirred from time to time during the night it was because, even in our dreams, the River of the World beckoned and called us with a charm that we could not resist.

### CHAPTER III

*'Oma mikunna' or 'Here is the portage'; We make sixty miles to Bemidji in four days.*



**W**HATEVER the first full day may not have been, it was decidedly two things: full of variety and experience. We made fewer miles, more portages and were more sorely tried than on any day of the journey. It started splendidly. At sunup we arose, broke camp, loaded the canoe and embarked soon after seven. We thought we were starting early: below St. Paul we often had done fifteen miles by seven.

Crossing the north arm, we passed under the first bridge on the river, a structure so low we had to bend our heads. At the outlet of Lake Itasca we entered a stream fifty feet wide and four feet deep, bordered by water grasses and reeds: pines rose behind them. We continued as full of animal spirits as bear cubs.

Two hundred yards beyond the bridge was the first dam, a trifling structure with a three-foot head, the first of many portages. Morning was young, hearts light, backs strong! They were stronger a week later. We took the first portage joyously. Then we got into the canoe. It refused to budge. We doffed trousers, shirts and footwear, and began to drag, haul and portage, labor that continued all morning. The assembled tourists laughed, but cheered us on. Later my brother-in-law wrote to say he hoped I would not claim to have canoed the entire Mississippi, because he had seen us walk the first half-mile. We labored and perspired! I counted drops of perspiration as they left my chin, until a steady stream flowed.

The sun rose high. Our backs, arms, legs and a million muscles that, since studying biology, we had forgotten existed, ached alarmingly. We portaged around Henzelmänn's, one of the early settlers, beyond where we struck deeper water. We climbed into the canoe and paddled as if racing. In a few yards

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

we were out, pulling the canoe over mud. We clambered in, only to disembark a few yards farther. Again we clambered in and out, a process repeated until we reached the first tributary, two and one-half miles below Lake Itasca.

Bill read from the map, "Sucker Creek! It must have been named for us."

From here on we had more water, and, we thought, clear paddling. Noon came, and with it a temperature of 90 degrees. Seeking a shady tree under which to eat and rest, we came upon a backwater, the first of four caused by beaver dams passed this day. During the summers of his college years, Bill had been a boomman in a British Columbia lumber camp. To him fell the "honor" of breaking the "jackpot," to release the waters to fill the shallow below. By the time we reached Veith Creek, the second tributary, with a flow of about "one-tenth of one second-foot," it was two-o'clock. We lunched in the blistering sun, on the duffle beside the lucid river.

Late in the afternoon came the first thrill of the voyage. We reached Kakebekous Falls or "Little Rock Falls." We had been paddling peacefully for a quarter of a mile with nothing to impede us. It seemed too good to be true! It was. A letter of Bill's to his mother, sent by her to my mother, probably so they could be equally worried about their sons, explains what followed.

Alida P. O., Minnesota,  
(Wherever that is.)

May 31, 1925.

DEAR MOTHER:

We are camped in the pasture of Ole Bjornstad or someone equally Scandinavian. It is not entirely our fault that tonight we have food to cook, tent to sleep in or canoe to paddle. Today we had one of those thrills without which no canoe trip is complete, and who should be the hero of the episode but our Pudge.

It had been an interesting day with enough obstacles, such as beaver dams and portages, to give plenty of variety and keep things from getting monotonous. Late in the afternoon we came to a spot where a rough dam had been built. Having surmounted all the other things in the path of our progress, we decided bravely to let our canoe down through the spillway of the dam rather than unpack, portage

and repack. Nothing to it for such "hardened canoeists," we thought, and "just think of the time we'd save." If we could only hurry along a little farther "it would seem (so Pudge keeps reminding me) as though we were really getting somewhere."

The spillway was a dozen feet wide and set ten feet below the top of the dam, planked on the bottom for its full fifty foot length. At the end there was a five-foot drop, where the water passed into the stream below. The logical process was for me to get up on the dam and snub the canoe through the spillway with the bow rope. Pudge was to stay on the canoe to steer it into the opening and keep it headed straight. But first, Pudge had to hack away part of the branches and debris so we could let the canoe down into the spillway. Not a bad plan, but we hadn't reckoned on the network of matted brush, leaves, sticks and branches that had collected at the opening, forming a dam. This debris held back a solid six-foot wall of water. The mass seemed solid; we thought it would hold long enough for us to get through. We were just nicely over the brush which held back all that water. I was snubbing from above and Pudge was assiduously keeping camera and Ry-Krisp dry, when, with that sound of cracking brush and much water moving fast, the pile gave way, and that solid six-foot wall of water was down on our Pudge, our canoe, and, much worse, our supper. The jerk on the craft broke the rope. I was helpless except for that resource always used at such times, giving advice.

But Pudge, brave youngster, lived up to all that we expect of him. With that mass of sticks, dirt and water coming down, he clung to the canoe as it steadily dragged him along the mossy planking the entire length of the spillway. Nothing to do then but point the canoe straight as it jumped the plank and let it go. He saw it in an instant, and when *The Charles H. Curley of St. Paul* was headed right, he let go and grabbed the side. I had clambered down outside the spillway and was able to lend him a hand and help pull him out, soaked but safe.

That breathless moment while waiting to see whether the canoe would take the drop without capsizing was one of a lifetime. I could see this trip to the Gulf going the way all others had. I was speculating on how far it was to the nearest railroad station and had set my teeth for a cream-filled angel food such as only you and Aunt Shine can bake. Almost afraid to watch, we each risked one eye, me hanging

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

on to Pudge and him still dangling halfway over the side of the spillway.

Paradoxical though it may seem, *Charles H. Curley* proved a perfect lady. Gracefully as Rickenbacher doing a nose dive, our trusty craft took the drop and came up smiling, as though it were part of a day's work.

"Hurrraaayyy," shouted Pudge, so loud that I know he missed his calling by not having been a rooter king. It certainly was a thankful pair of paddlers that hurried down the shore to intercept the drifting canoe before it upset on the rocks of the rapids below.

Having a wonderful vacation, mother. I wouldn't trade the experiences we've had so far for anything. Won't be sorry, however, to get back to a little home cooking at the end of the fortnight. Tell Richard to be sure to mow the lawn at least once before I get back. Pudge is happy and doesn't care what happens so long as he continues to reduce his waistline.

Lots of love from your boy,

BILL.

Bill's remark about my waistline justifies this story. The young lady who agreed not to object to my taking the trip, after bribes in the form of promises of travel, had given me a silk and lace handkerchief. I took it in the spirit that knights of old wore their ladies' colors in tournaments. I imagined it would be the only ladies' handkerchief ever to traverse the entire Mississippi. It had been carefully packed away, but Bill discovered it. Thereafter, whenever he ran low in spirits, he would dive into the duffle, unpack everything, bring out the kerchief, and, with solemnity and gravity, say, breathing deeply of its fragrance, "It reminds me of lemon pie. NOW, I can paddle." And as soon as the handkerchief was replaced, paddle he would, always like one possessed. Bill, once stellar guard on the University of Minnesota basketball team, inspired by a lady's kerchief! The age of chivalry lives!

Below the spillway the rocks became too large and numerous for our canoe to navigate. The water ran between them, leaving nothing for *The Charles H. Curley of St. Paul* to do but fly or stick. It stuck, tight as a bump on a log. Rain was coming on. We climbed the high rock and gravel banks and

---

## ONLY TEN MILES

---

saw a house in a clearing. Here was one of the families that was demolishing the last frontier of Minnesota. It belonged to Ole Peterson, whose buxom wife, carrying two foaming pails of fresh milk and surrounded by large broods of children and chickens, gave us permission to camp.

The tent soon was up and a pail on the fire singing a song of soup and supper. While we were eating, the storm broke. We worried not. The canoe had been beached. The trench around the tent was deep: the slope of the ground satisfactory. As we sat in the balloon silk tent eating, we laughed at the elements. No one knows how good food is until he has tasted it out under skies, where the breezes whirr and the mosquitoes beat a tattoo on the netting. After our meal, arrayed like September Morn's little brothers, we rushed to the river and threw pails of water at one another, dried as fast as the mosquitoes permitted, and rushed back to the tent.

"Let's see how far we've come," suggested Bill.

Out came maps and flashlight. We estimated twenty miles, scanned our course to Kakabekous Falls, two sharp turns and there we were, ten miles our total for the day. It couldn't be right! It wasn't possible to get so tired, sunburned, bruised, sore, and meet so many handicaps in ten miles. We looked at the charts with disapprobation. Convinced the maps were in error, we dropped to sleep, with the rain on our tent for a lullaby. What bard could sing of that first night by the river? Peace. Rest. We dreamed quieting dreams, watched over by the spirits of the Indians, in whose homeland we were.

The first Mississippi miles on a small scale resemble the river below Cairo, with sandbars, caving banks, and countless curves.

The Chippewa knew the Father of Waters as Mee-zee (great) see-bee (river). It was called Wat-pah-tah-ka (big river) by the Sioux. The Potawatomi, Fox and Sauk tribes called it Mee-chaw-see-poo (big river). The Winnebagoes knew it as bluffwalled river or Ne-scas-hut-ta-ra. Mech-e-se-bee, the original Algonquin name by which it was called among tribes La Salle and Joliet visited, meant "Great Stream." From De Soto's expedition came the Indian names Chucagua, Tamalisseu, Tapatu and Mico, Rio Grande, and Palisado or La Pali-

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

sade, from floating trees seen near and at its mouth, appearing like a palisade. Another Spanish designation was Escondido, "hidden from sight by innumerable passes, cut-offs, and bayous at the mouth."

French designations had wide range, from St. Louis, as Iberville called it for his king, to Marquette's "Conception," Joliet's "Baude," named after the family of Governor Frontenac, and "Colbert" for Jean Baptiste Colbert, prime minister who died in 1683. Father Allouez in the Jesuit "Relation" of 1667 spoke of it as Messipi. Hennepin's maps of 1697 spelled it Meschasipi. Labal called it Michi Sepe. Marquette spelled it Mississipi. On southern reaches, one name was "mish sha sippukni," or "beyond age." Another was "meact chassipi" or "ancient father of waters." The Spanish also called it Rio del Espiritu Santo or "River of the Holy Spirit." Even had Mississippi not meant "Great Stream" or "Father of Waters," it would have been necessary to invent such a name.

Wet firewood, a partially wet camping outfit, sore muscles and aching backs caused delay next morning. Out of practice after the winter, it was ten o'clock before everything was packed. The river had fallen during the night. Only a portage would do. Ole Peterson's youngsters helped. One carried the paddles and the other our life preserver. Below Chill Creek we found more water and better paddling. Many times the next two days, as we followed the convoluted course, we had to lift the canoe over "down" trees or lie flat on our backs to work under windfalls. The second day we made fifteen miles!

By noon we were in Blaufuss Meadows, back of which rose fringes of tamarack and scrub pines. The river follows a course so serpentine that we often ran into the banks as we turned. Fields of wild rice waved yellow-green on both sides. We seemed in a labyrinth. The banks most of the second and third days were from three to four feet above water level. We would paddle steadily, and, upon looking up, see the same tree we had noted an hour before. Climbing out to observe the course, from our slight elevation we often counted ten bends.

An air of loneliness hangs over these far upper reaches. Except for beavers, we saw few signs of animals. The only

---

## RED-WINGED BLACKBIRDS

---

birds we saw were sheid-pokes, crows and blackbirds. The first week we saw millions of red-winged blackbirds. Often we glided close to the feathered people, where they chattered, bobbing on reeds, swaying in the wind. We were never out of sight of red-winged blackbirds until we left Minnesota; frequently we saw them as far as Vicksburg.

While in Blaufuss Meadows, in mid-afternoon, there broke such a rainstorm as neither of us had experienced. Having forgotten during winter the art of packing a canoe, the duffle sat high, easy prey to wind-driven rain. Though Bill could have resisted Cleopatra or Helen of Troy, the harder it rained the louder he shouted:

*I'm a little wildwood flower,  
Growing wilder every hour.  
Nobody ever cultivated me.  
I——am——wild!*

He kept up our spirits, although a dreary night loomed. Clouds hung low, but once the sun broke through to taunt us. In wet clothes, with tired arms and aching backs, we paddled until six, reasoning it was no worse to set up a wet camp at seven than at five.

During the day we passed Shevlin Creek, Chill Creek, and La Salle River, the latter nearly as large as the Mississippi. About six o'clock we shot rapids which were more dangerous to the canoe because of jagged rocks than to us, as the water was only knee deep. An inspiration struck us: we decided to seek shelter. A two-mile tramp up a sandy trail, past a deserted sawmill, through cut-over land starting back to second growth, led us to the home of Martin Hammer.

Thousands of "Martin Hammers" are still found in Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, the Dakotas and Montana. This one is by trade a carpenter, by occupation a farmer, by reason of necessity a lumberjack, and by nature a philosopher. Economically on the edge of the frontier, he is breaking new ground, working hard, living simply, building up a farm that some day will be enjoyed by well-to-do children. He is not a wheat farmer who plants a crop in the spring and expects by fall, God and Congress will have converted it into cash.



---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

Before Martin Hammer's little farmhouse, in the sparsely settled acres of Hubbard county, we hesitated. Rain was pouring down. I wanted to return and sleep under the canoe. Had I been a housewife, I should have called the dog or fired the shotgun at two such bedraggled tramps as we must have appeared. Bill's oratory saved us. Aided by savory odours of supper and sounds of a crackling fire, he restrained me from fleeing possible feminine wrath. Mrs. Hammer opened the door. What a flood of eloquence Bill unloosed. He told who we were, where and how we were going, and extolled my virtues until I was sure I was far too good to live, making himself, modestly, only one-half of one per cent more virtuous than myself. He pictured our dire condition so vividly I nearly wept from self-pity.

Mr. Hammer would be home soon, and she would see if he would let us stay. In the meantime, we could come in and get dried. Martin arrived, and, after hearing his wife's story, bade us welcome. Bill's atrocious pun, saying that a remark by Hammer hit the nail on the head, luckily was enjoyed. After supper, our host showed us that the day is gone when the farmer and his family are isolated from the world, when bad roads and blizzards bar access to "the things that are." Tuning in with his "one-lung" radio set, he gave us an hour's program. We slept on a straw mattress on the attic floor, but were secure from the rain pelting outside.

June 2 broke clear and warm: the rain had left a world washed clean. This day we stole rhubarb, traversed the most crooked reach on the river, paddled twenty-four miles and started saving woodticks. We passed Mud Creek, and Hennepin and Little Mississippi rivers. Our stream began to grow, becoming during the afternoon deep enough for us to paddle without striking submerged logs or hitting bottom. All morning we wound between willow flats and sand ridges topped with jack pine and scrub trees. Several times we chased broods of young ducks. They would scamper close to one bank, the mother following the other. Flying low, she would land on her tail feathers and scoot over the water, imitating a bird with a broken wing, repeating this until we had passed her babies'

---

## WOOD TICK COLLECTORS

---

hiding place. Then she would rise, circle widely, and rejoice her brood.

All afternoon we paddled through meadows, circling and twisting until we decided a very captious Father of Waters had set out to prove that the Mississippi is the longest possible distance between two points. Even the birds seemed lost in the mazes of wild rice. Instead of returning home, they made overtures to the first attractive lady bird they met. Nothing else could explain the ceaseless chatter of blackbirds. Once we saw six red-winged blackbirds attack a marauding pair of crows. The battle lasted even after the crows had risen high in the air, the red-winged fighters following them, harassing their larger opponents until the crows fled ignominiously.

We spent the night in John Stainbrook's sawmill yard, eight miles by the Jefferson Highway and sixteen by water from Bemidji, the first town on the river. Rain fell while we were eating our evening meal, driving us into the tent. There were no lamps, movies, or radio, so we hunted woodticks. Common in the north woods in May and June, these doughty little parasites have buried themselves so deeply in the flesh as to necessitate operations to remove them. We had a hunting contest. Bill won, finding nine on me, while I removed seven from him. An official count of woodtick activities while we were together, showed that sixty-four preferred Bill, while sixty-one thought more of me.

The fourth day broke clear. Oh the joy of river mornings, refreshed awakening, after perfect sleep! Peace and beauty, birds showering music upon the air, the sun smiling. The rush to water, splashing and spluttering: brisk rub and ruddy glow. A new day, new sights. There is a joy in moving, a rotund quality in the air. Breathing is a pleasure. On a river morning, when the sun is risen and woods alive, man is impervious to heartache. Out in the opulent air, still dew-laden, there is an intoxicating urbanity and jocosity. The phrase "happy hours" epitomizes the momentous minutes before the sun draws too near. A cool breeze filtering up the river embraces the skin, flirts with the hair. There is nothing parochial about life. There are doleful days on any long trip, and perfect ones. But no day can be truly splendid unless the campers

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

awaken with a love of life, an appreciation of nature, in their hearts.

For most of the sixteen miles above Bemidji the river flows over sand and gravel. We saw schools of red horse and pickerel as we glided over the sunlit sands. For three days meadows had kept the timber line far back. Now, on some stretches, the trees grew over the water and our road was down a sparkling green-canopied highway. We lunched in the canoe at the end of Schoolcraft Lake, known locally as Carl Lake. A stream fifty yards long links it with the river.

Thus far we had shot rapids, run upon sunken logs and submerged rocks, ridden over beaver dams, and dodged barbed wire fences but had met nothing really dangerous. With our proposed camp on Diamond Point, Lake Bemidji, three miles away, we anticipated an hour's paddle. We reckoned without knowledge. Several hundred yards below our lunch site, we ran into a log boom, reaching from shore to shore and extending as far as we could see. We paddled on, without looking over the situation, pushing logs aside for one hundred yards. Then difficulties began. The current drove the canoe sideways in spite of us. We were jammed, with logs working down on us from upriver. One end of the canoe pointed skyward, settling the stern dangerously low in the water. *The Charles H. Curley of St. Paul* faced disaster. The only way to avoid crushing the canoe was to work inshore and back along the edge of the logs.

Jumping from the canoe, Bill used his paddle as a pike pole, clearing a way toward shore. Grabbing two logs, I buoyed myself as best I could; Bill jerked the canoe ahead. While he went through the antics of a dancer interpreting spring, belaboring the logs, I propelled the canoe through the narrow lane to shore. Then I looked at Bill and roared with laughter, thinking of how he resembled Eliza crossing the river on cakes of ice to escape the bloodhounds.

A phone call brought Richard Duxbury, a fraternity brother, who informed us the river was blocked for two miles to Lake Bemidji. We then made "Duxbury Portage." By four o'clock we were encamped on the shores of Lake Bemidji. It had taken us four days to make the first sixty-five miles. At that

---

## BEMIDJI, THE FIRST TOWN

---

rate we would reach the Gulf about New Years. H. Z. Mitchell, best known editor in northern Minnesota, spent more space in a news story of the trip explaining the cause of our red noses than on everything else combined.

Beltrami county, of which Bemidji is county seat, is named for Count Giacomo Constantine Beltrami, a swashbuckling Italian explorer who sought the sources of the Mississippi. He arrived at Fort Snelling in 1823 and accompanied an expedition headed by Major Stephen H. Long up the Minnesota and down the Red River. Beltrami, with his superior airs accentuated by Long's jealousy, made a poor companion. At Pembina, with a half-breed guide and two Indians, who later deserted him, he left the party. Late in August 1823, he reached Red Lake, south of which he discovered Lake Julia, the Julian source of the Mississippi.

Bemidji! Not always has it been a clean, well paved city of six thousand. Like many towns, it has become community-conscious and painfully forgetful of its wild, virile "old days." Here is a city with a past. An infant compared with towns down the river, it is a city where ghosts stalk, where early settlers still live. This first municipality on the river was not organized as a village until October 1896, named for the Ojibway chief, Bemidji. The word means "Where the current flows across the wide water," is a contraction of Bem-jig-e-mug, and refers to the Mississippi flowing through the lake.

Bemidji once was capital of a great forest empire. Logging made the town when Minnesota was famous for her white pine. Lumberjacks went into the woods in September; most of them stay until March. Then, from two to three thousand loggers piled into town. What noise and excitement at Bemidji's three score saloons! What sounds of jollity, fighting when big men with big hearts and a surplus of animal energies gathered to log over again the season's cut, and attempt to drink all of the liquor in the state. They came in singing:

*He's a wild rip-snortin' devil ever' time he comes to town.*

*He's porky, he's a moose-cat, too busy to set down.*

*But when his silver's registered and his drinks is comin' few,*

*He's then as tame as other jacks that's met their Waterloo.*

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

He was a man, was the lumberjack, lovable, cursing, rollicking, hardworking. He came to town and forgot saw, cant-hook, jam, pike-pole, striding eagerly in staggered trousers, calked boots, mackinaw, spent his money on liquor, women and gambling, and went back to the woods grubstaked and in debt to some saloon keeper. In spite of what the Comstocks say, these scars on Bemidji are not hideous scars. There was drinking and gambling, there were dance hall girls, but there was a freedom, a buoyancy, a virility, that adds glamour to those not far-off years.

Lumbermen estimate that there still are 10,000,000 feet of timber in the logs in the Mississippi between Bemidji and Lake Itasca, good pine ready for the saw after a summer's drying. We must have bumped every log as we paddled our canoe in the low water of those upper reaches.

The city has developed older and younger sets, a golf course, country club, civic organizations, and persons who shudder at the thought of the "good old days." But paved streets will not make thousands forget that oxcarts and lumberjacks once used these roads and that new brick hardware stores, and filling stations stand on ground that once knew saloons and dance halls.

## CHAPTER IV

### *Stuck on stumps; Wolf, Long and Cass Lakes; Deserted House; A life struggle across treacherous Lake Winnibigoshish.*

**T**AKE your portages philosophically," encouraged Bill. He dodged a heavy object: a frying pan was missing that night. The river was filled with logs at the entrance to Wolf Lake. Another portage! We had left Bemidji at seven o'clock, crossed the lake and descended the stream eight miles to the first power dam on the river. En route, we reached the northernmost point on the Mississippi, seventy-five miles from the source.

While paddling along decorously, praising the air and wondering how far we would get by night, we experienced a chastening incident. We were two miles above the power dam. This country was logged before the dam was put in, raising the water. Suddenly we found ourselves stuck, perched precariously on top of two stumps. Even energy expended in thought as to how to get off rocked *The Charles H. Curley of St. Paul* tumultuously. We tried backing off, sidling off, and felt for stumps against which to push, but nothing availed. When we had about decided to wait for the fall rains, two boys came along in a rowboat.

"Whattarya setting out there for?" one called.

I explained that we were trying to solve the riddle of the universe, but Bill gave away our secret. Laughter so convulsed the boys that it was some time before they could row. They made the most of their opportunity. After naming the stumps between us and the dam, giving advice on how to avoid them, and explaining how to navigate a canoe overland, they finally freed the craft. We thanked them and were starting on, when one asked how far we were going.

"All the way to the Gulf of Mexico," I answered.

"Not if anything's in the way, you ain't," the freckled one shouted. "You might in a auto or German tank, something

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

that won't get hung up on a twig. If you get stuck again, let us know." The wind saved us from any more.

The portage around the first power dam was easy. Rapids below the dam, once known to the Indians as Metoswa or "Ten Rapids," were good sport. An hour of steady paddling brought us to within sight of Wolf Lake, where several hundred yards of logs blocked our progress. There Bill uttered the advice he had read in some outdoor magazine.

We were in a large swamp, through which the river flowed into Wolf Lake. Recent rains had made the muskeg or swamp unusually wet. We plodded through mud and grass up to our knees: while portaging the canoe we went in nearly to our hips. Where the Mississippi leaves Wolf Lake, we nooned, June fifth. The most refreshing combination for lunch was blackberry jam, Ry-Krisp or health bread and milk. It possessed nourishment, was light and easily digested. When very hungry we added an apple or piece of bologna, but two-thirds of our noon meals were of jam, health bread and milk.

The land through which we had just passed was partly cutover country, with a few hills rising from muskegs, in which wild rice, willows, birds and mosquitoes abide. Half an hour after lunch we were back in the canoe.

A quarter of a mile of river took us from Long Lake to Cass Lake, the most beautiful portion of the trip above St. Paul. The Indians called it "Ga-misquawakokag saigaiigun," or "The-place-of-the-red-cedars-lake." The Mississippi crosses it at its greatest width, about eight miles, from west to northeast. The town of Cass Lake is on the south end. Star Island, an emerald gem, sets on the west side, containing Lake Helen, named for Helen Gould of New York, who visited here in 1900.

We were now paddling across waters named Lake Cassina for General Lewis Cass, who, while executive of the Michigan Territory in 1820, headed an expedition from Detroit, seeking the source of the Father of Waters. The name was given the lake by Schoolcraft, who, as government mineralogist, accompanied the expedition which reached here July 21, 1820. The Cass party, leaving Detroit, ascended Lake Huron, cruised the south shore of Lake Superior, ascended the St.

---

## JOKE ON THE BISHOP

---

Louis River, made the Sandy Lake portage and continued up the Father of Waters one hundred and seventy miles to these waters. It was at Cass Lake that Beltrami came into contact with the far upper Mississippi. The Chippewas called the Red Cedar Lake tribe of their nation "Muk-im-dua-in-e-wug," or "Men who take by force." From this came the name Pillager tribe.

Near this lake Bishop Henry B. Whipple, Minnesota's first great Episcopal Churchman, founded a mission for the Chippewa. There is a story which says that on Bishop Whipple's first visit into this part of the wilderness, he asked one of the chiefs if it were safe to leave his valise there while they made a side trip. "Oh, yes," replied the chief, "There isn't another white man in this part of the country." Near Cass Lake is one of the large Chippewa graveyards.

As we paddled on to Cass Lake we felt for the first time on the trip the thrill of:

*A life on the ocean wave,  
A home on the rolling deep.*

We passed Star Island and were a mile from shore. I glanced behind us.

"Mushka, Bill," I shouted, Ojibway for "Look."

A torrent was sweeping the lake toward us. We could hear the rain and see it beating the waters a mile away. We barely had time to cover the outfit. Off came shirts. Under shelter went everything the long ground clothe would cover. On one end of it I sat: on the other rested Bill's feet. A weird light played over the waters, through open spaces in the eastern sky. What looked like a wall drove at us, hitting us like a waterfall, drenching us, cooling our heated bodies, soaking everything.

Though we shivered as the cold rain pelted our backs and ran into our boots in streams, our discomforts were unworthy of notice compared with those endured by the Lieutenant Zebulon M. Pike expedition, which reached this lake February 12, 1806. With the purchase of Louisiana by the United States, interest in the source of the Mississippi increased. In August, 1805, this twenty-six-year-old officer left St. Louis



---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

by keelboat with a score of men. The party arrived at Leech Lake February 1 and declared it to be the main source of the river. Pike designated Red Cedar Lake the upper source. Reaching Leech and Red Cedar lakes in the dead of a severe northern Minnesota winter, he had little opportunity to make investigations: his reports say nothing of waters beyond Red Cedar Lake.

When the rain stopped and we were well across Cass Lake, Bill said, "Let's see what your new fishing outfit can do."

I had a new rod and reel, and assortment of lures that would have made Izaak Walton's eyes pop out. I cast my shiny new Pike-Oreno into the lake, and several minutes later got a strike that felt like Jonah's whale.

"I've got a muskie, Bill!" I shouted.

"Sit down," said Bill. "You're not on an ocean liner."

That fish weighed forty pounds! I could see him fighting way down in the clear waters. The boat began to move slowly; the line stretched taut before me.

"Bill, he's dragging us through the water!"

"Don't let him somersault or we goners," he warned.

Glancing around, I saw Bill paddling, carefully and quietly. I reeled in my "muskie."

"A snake," scoffed Bill.

Unkind fate had turned my muskellonge into a pickerel, but I swear on a stack of Congressional Records as high as the Woolworth building that a forty-pound fish struck.

It was growing dusk as we paddled out of Cass Lake into the river, seeking a camping place. Around was wild country, burned or cutover land, rank with bushes, grass and second growth. At dusk we spied, a mile below Cass Lake, a deserted house that had been suggested as shelter in case of rain. Next to sleeping in a cemetery, the best test of courage is sleeping in a deserted house. This one might be haunted. Had we known, as we unpacked for the night, that the house was inhabited if not haunted, we should have slept in the canoe. True, nobody occupied the house, but a district convention of mosquitoes from north-central Minnesota was in session. All delegates were present, swapping stories on the number of persons they had bitten since the last conclave.

---

## CONVENTION OF MOSQUITOES

---

We were not annoyed much at first, for we moved with dispatch. We tacked a blanket at the window of one room and another at the door, and fancied ourselves secure. Then we ate. The moment we were were still, in spite of the campfire, the assault began. Smoke and smell of grass and weeds was perfume to them: with the heat they warmed to the attack. In desperation we bolted our food and retired to our room.

A fatal error! That night I realized that from man to mosquito, life is a constant conflict. We ought to have stood in the river all night, or thrown hatchets at one another, anything easy and pleasant. Instead, we locked every mosquito attending the convention in the room with us. It was impossible to kill them off. They multiplied in numbers and ferocity as the night progressed. The room grew hotter: our nerves more on edge. We were so bitten that we could not tell when a new mosquito was biting or old bites itching. After a night of twisting, turning and rolling, we saw signs of dawn through a thin place in the blanket. We arose, dressed amidst heaps of slain mosquitoes, and, to the dirges of their living relatives, took down the blankets. During the night a cool breeze had arisen. As it filtered through the house, the mosquitoes left. We hurriedly packed, slid *The Charles H. Curley of St. Paul* out into the current, and began the day, tired, hungry, more irritable than any other time we were together. As we pushed off, as glorious a sun as ever gazed in amused wonder at two sleepy youths in the wilderness burst over the eastern horizon.

We had slept on land set aside for the Ojibways of the Mississippi by treaty at Washington, March 19, 1867, and since then opened to individual settlement by Indians. We searched as we went along, for Indians with paint and plumes, savage decorations, for redskins armed with bows, arrows or tomahawks. We saw a few tepees, but no scalp locks or war implements. Indians today look as peaceful as an aged housewife, in old hats, store clothes, shoes, with an occasional gaudy shirt lending color to an otherwise unpicturesque, drab relic of a great and noble race.

Once we suddenly came upon an Indian boy, whistling in the woods. When he discovered us, without a second look, he bounded away like a frightened deer. He had heard of the

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

white man. In Minnesota, 551,750 acres of Indian lands remain. We often saw Indian houses along the river banks, most of them deserted in the summer. The Indians range through the wild miles north of the Mississippi, gathering blueberries, hunting, fishing, living a semi-nomadic life. Originally the reservations ran from Wolf Lake, where the Chippewa reservation began, through Long, Cass and Winnibigoshish lakes down the Mississippi almost to Grand Rapids.

The tortuous stream finally tired of swinging from one side of the little valley below Cass Lake to the other, and turned east to find its way between sand hills. Though we could not see Lake Winnibigoshish, we knew by our charts that it was near. After a few minutes rest on a low hill, from where we could see reeds between us and open water, but not the other shore, we resumed our course. Where we entered the reeds, it seemed the river made a last effort to escape, among many openings and twisted channels. Following our compass we paddled through several hundred yards of reeds too high to see over, even standing in the canoe, and emerged onto Lake Winnibigoshish. The shoreline is low, with a few sand hills. Along much of the water's edge dead trees jut up or thick reeds make it difficult to gain shore. Beyond water as far as we could see was our destination, Winnibigoshish Dam.

The lake is fifteen by seventeen miles. All who knew anything about it told us Winnibigoshish was treacherous. Captain Glazier said he was windbound three days. Chambers was windbound two days and when he did cross he said it was the most dangerous and unpleasant experience on the trip. John Koors and Louis Neuman of Bemidji, who canoed from there to Hannibal, where they gave up after upsetting and losing their outfit, warned us against its vagaries. We had planned to skirt the west shore, camp near Third River, and round the north shore to the dam the next day.

It was nearly noon, June 6, when we emerged from the reeds onto open water. The surface was a somnolent, ominous calm. The sky was overcast, of leaden hue, looking as though someone had drawn a curtain across it. There was not a breath of wind, not the slightest movement of air, not a rush or reed astir. The atmosphere was warm, sticky, humid. We were one

---

## A STORM ON BIG WATER

---

day behind schedule. It had rained every day since the start and a day's delay in Bemidji because of a storm had set us behind. That lost day irritated us. Each night as we prepared for bed, I remarked to Bill, "If we could only get to (a more distant point each night) it would seem as though we were getting somewhere!" Each time Bill agreed, "Yep."

We ceased paddling: our canoe glided out onto the sullen, still sheet. It seemed that the water challenged us. We felt no surge of daring: we had outgrown that. We had been on "big water" before. We had shot rapids where there was plenty of "white water." We had canoed on a British Columbia mountain stream with Indians in dugouts. Now, Lake Winnibigoshish faced us. In Ojibway, it means "dirty, wretched, miserable water." We looked across, and saw nothing miserable or wretched about it. No dirt had been stirred from its shallow bottom. By skirting the shore we might play safe and remain one day behind schedule. By crossing we would brave the wrath of the water gods, gain a day and experience the thrill of crossing the widest water on the journey. I looked at Bill. He looked at me. We dug our paddles into the water. We could have done nothing else. Our muscles were now used to wielding the paddles, though the endurance of the lower river miles had not developed. We could sit several hours at a time without tiring. Our exposed parts resembled boiled lobsters, while my nose, always the brightest thing on the trip, was a headlight.

Steady paddling and an hour later and we were one-fourth of the way across. Looking ahead we seemed scarcely to have advanced. Never, even when out at sea, had land seemed so far away. We ate chunks of health bread, took a five minute breathing spell, and drank lake water. A slight ruffle appeared on the cobalt surface. The air became more oppressive. Humidity in Minnesota seldom is noticeable: a storm invariably accompanies it. We saw behind the leaden veil the sun at its zenith. We dug our paddles in and continued to push the heavily laden canoe through darkening waters. With duffle and paddlers *The Charles H. Curley of St. Paul* carried five hundred pounds. An hour later we took a second rest. There

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

is a vast difference between paddling on rivers and on lakes. Rivers have buoyancy, motion, life, that lakes lack.

A drink of water, another chunk of bread, and we were refreshed. Never was full vigor more exigent. There was yet no wind, but fair-sized waves lapped the canoe. On all sides of us, far, far away, land was greyish purple: places showed only a faint line, with others nearer. Larger trees were silhouetted against the purple sky. As we resumed paddling the wind struck us from behind with the fury of the masses storming the Bastille. A side blow of half that force would have sent us to the bottom of twenty-five feet of water. The canoe performed a saraband, sending, as it pirouetted, some of the outfit overboard. Bill kept the craft out of the fast deepening trough, while I salvaged the articles.

This treacherous lake, this sycophant, had tricked us. We believed now in its putative cruelty. The Ne-be-naw-baigs or "water spirits" were angry. Two minutes after the first vicious onslaught, the battle began in earnest. When the wind struck again, we were ready for anything the canoe could live through. That first savage puff descended without warning, as if an Ojibway medicine man had conjured it up out of his pots and moanings. Two of the most harassing hours we had ever endured followed, hours that tried our bodies, and our confidence. Not only were muscles strained, but the determined, ceaseless poundings of the wind tested our belief in one another and in ourselves.

The wind, from the west, drove after us a following sea. The gale increased, whipping angrily the seething waters. A clear sweep across the misanthropic lake gave it better play the farther we went. Water surged and boiled, beaten quickly into awful action. The lake is comparatively shallow. We wondered grimly how long it would take us to reach bottom. For fifteen minutes we battled. The waves grew so high that as we rose on the crest of a comber we could observe on all sides whitecapped, churning, seas. Dropping into the trough, we could see only water, surrounding us, above us like the sword of Damocles. The wind, aghast at our temerity, seemed determined to rend us into atoms. Canoes have been called skittish. Never was larger craft so staunch.

---

## THE ANGRY "WATER SPIRITS"

---

If our mileage included the ups and downs of the canoe, we traveled fifty miles in crossing. The wind howled like the accompaniment to a D. W. Griffith storm. We shouted, but words failed to hold together, becoming weird, wild voices in the eerie wind. In our veins, I imagined, flowed the blood of Poseidon, god of the sea, and his wife Amphitrite. The paddles were to us what the trident was to him, our power and defense. Another half hour we fought on. Muscles strained, taut steel; backs and shoulders ached. Our necks seemed pulling out of our bodies. Feet and legs ached from bracing against them. But on we went, stroke, stroke, dip and pull. The wind twisted the paddles in spite of our firm grasps. Often we reached for a wave, only to find it gone. Across our stomachs with each stroke ran a "Z" movement of muscles.



*"Muscles strained, taut steel; backs and shoulders ached."*

An unusually large wave struck the canoe, washing over Bill's head, shifting the outfit. The watch, which had been fastened to a thwart, disappeared; we lost track of time. The waves increased. As we dove over one, another would break over the bow, flinging itself into my face and body, flowing over the outfit. Then one would catch up with us, leap over the stern, roll along the gunwale and return to the lake. A grade school teacher once prophesied that if I were not drowned I surely would be decapitated. I believed her now. Water swished, slushed and swashed as the canoe twisted its tortured way through threatening seas. The wind lulled. We had only one life preserver.

"Match you for the life preserver."

"How?" shouted Bill.

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

"Paddles."

"Full hand or none."

The eastern shore drew nearer: the wind howled louder: the waves rose higher. At the top it looked as far down to the bottom as from the summit of a Coney Island roller coaster. The downward trip was like a twenty-story elevator descent.

"No rocks here, Bill," I shouted.

"And, if we could only get across Lake Winnibigoshish today," he replied, "it would seem as though we were getting somewhere."

Slowly we approached the shore. Trees ceased to resemble inverted feather dusters. We rounded a sandbar that projects far out on the right. In its lee we stepped from the canoe. Never was land so welcome. We could hardly walk. Our arms were limp. Youth and condition came to the rescue. A brief rest, a short walk, and fifteen minutes later we pulled up at the dam, where a crowd had gathered. By now we could scarcely talk. Our throats were dry; our jaws ached from gritting our teeth; our goaded muscles throbbed. But we grinned happily and made for a little nearby store. We had scarcely eaten all day. It was now three o'clock.

Some food disposed of, we stretched out on the pine needle covered ground. We had conquered Lake Winnibigoshish! We offered encomiums for our deliverance to St. Nicholas, patron saint of mariners, and dropped to sleep. Rain beating into our faces awakened us two hours later. Between showers we portaged around the dam, made things shipshape for the night, and were ready again to laugh at the elements. We had not been windbound. We were back on schedule. What cared we for tired arms, aching backs, sore legs, sunburn? We had met the challenge, won the battle, crossed the lake in less than four hours despite the storm.

The Indian is becoming Americanized with a vengeance. Through one of the forest rangers we met a striking Indian named Charley, who sold minnows to fish-mad anglers who infest the dam all summer, especially the week ends. His labors were not so arduous that he did not have time to talk with us.

---

## AN INDIAN FORTUNE HUNTER

---

"They say youse are going to the Gulf of Mexico," he said at last. He had been to Indian school and he remembered some geography, but little grammar. We told him such was our intention.

"That's near Oklahoma, ain't it?"

"It's nearer than Minnesota," I agreed.

"Mebbey you get over there?"

We said there was a bare possibility.

"Last summer," he said in a confidential air, "Osage Indians from Oklahoma come here in big Packards. Swell cars. Swell Osage squaws. Some single. Some widows. All rich from oil. Not stuck up. Wore swell clothes, plenty earrings, finger rings. Couple like me pretty swell." Charley was a good looking Indian. He went on, "When they come they go out on Chippewa lands, take off store clothes, dress like Osages, fish, pick berries, hunt deer. Spend coupla weeks. Have swell time. Then get in Packard cars and go back to Oklahoma."

"That's very interesting, Charley," I commented.

"That's not all. You do me big favor?"

"If I can, Charley."

"You write down my name, address? If you go to Oklahoma, give them to some nice, big, rich, swell squaw?"

"If I have a chance, Charley."

"Tell her if she write me, send train money, Charley come to Oklahoma. Marry squaw quick!"

Had we gone to Oklahoma, Charley would have been deluged with wedding pleas, so glowingly would I have described him. Anyone with his head for business would have guarded well the riches of his Oklahoma squaw, made affluent by oil. I withhold his last name. He may have taken a Chippewa to wife, and Indian women, too, are jealous.

Winnibigoshish is one of Minnesota's ten thousand lakes, famous for fishing. We crossed the lake Saturday. All day parties angled in the lake and just below the dam, usually catching the limit in a few minutes. Hundreds of anglers, with wives and children, fish here each weekend in season, taking away all the too liberal laws of the state permit.

We sat on the dam in the early evening, watching fishermen below the runway, so close together that at times they had



---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

difficulty landing their fish. An old Indian came up to us, and, after greeting us with "How," asked, "You fellas own this here canoe?"

We told him we did.

"How much it worth?"

I said that new it would cost about \$150.

"You sell her?"

"No," I replied, and asked why he did not make a canoe of his own, a birch bark canoe.

"Too much work when white man make such good canoes and gives us money to buy such good canoes."

He asked why I would not sell it. I said I needed it for a long, long journey, and explained that the sun would set and the moon rise one hundred times or more before I ended it.

"How much far um go?"

"Two thousand, five hundred miles."

"Um, two thousand, five hundred miles? How far you call it to Grand Rapids?"

"About seventy miles."

"Um, seventy miles to Grand Rapids," the old Indian puzzled. "You go two thousand, five hundred miles. Why?"

"To learn where this river goes," I replied. "To see it grow from a little stream to one a mile wide where big ships ride."

A long silence. He eyed us carefully, then asked, "You, um, ever been in um hospital?"

"Oh, yes. Had my tonsils out."

"Um, never for head?" He tapped his.

"Oh, no," I reassured him.

"Well, mebbey sometime, mebbey sometime." And he stalked off, in moccasins, flannel shirt and corduroy trousers, wondering at the workings of the white man's mind.

The Cree Indian is reputed the world champion canoeist, not at parlor tricks on a glassy lake, but when it comes to getting someplace, the true test of canoeing. He is of the same breed as the Chippewa, but if he has become as lazy as the Indians we saw in northern Minnesota, his days of supremacy are past.

---

## THE NORTH WOODS SAGE

---

What a contrast between these government wards and the stalwart race that ejected the Sioux three centuries ago! Chippewa or Ojibway means "to roast till puckered up," and refers to the seams on their moccasins. Their characters have suffered the same changes as the moccasins. This sorry remnant of the red man in Minnesota is a branch of the proud Algonquin who dominated much of northeastern America three centuries ago. The Iriquois drove them eastward. The Ojibways drove the Foxes from northern Wisconsin and the Sioux from northern Minnesota. At the height of their power their territory covered a region one thousand miles from east to west.

That night we sat in the little store, dissipating on ice cream and chocolate sauce. An old man approached us, the picturesque type described in north country novels, but seldom seen in real life, ruddy faced, grey-haired, wearing a pipe and coarse clothes.


"Are you the youngsters who crossed the lake today?" he inquired with a none too credulous air.

"Yessirreee," we chorused proudly.

"Well," he replied, between puffs as he lit his pipe, "They ain't all dead yet, are they?" We were too stunned to reply. "But," he concluded, turning to go, breaking the match between his thumb and index finger, "It ain't entirely your fault."

## CHAPTER V

### *The 'Manito' Fleet; We hold Sunday Services and return to Civilization at Grand Rapids.*

E HAD not wished to paddle on Sunday. We were in the habit of observing the Sabbath, not in Puritanical austerity, but as a day of quiet. We should have preferred to rest after adventures calculated to increase our respect, if not love, for "Dame Nature", but concluded it would be more peaceful paddling down the river than at the dam near scores of noisy fishermen.

So we left Winnibigoshish Dam early Sunday morning. Already fishermen were returning with their limit. A mile below the dam we entered Little Winnibigoshish Lake, one mile in diameter. Here we came upon the first work of the federal government in straightening the course of the river, to permit more rapid passage of water from Lake Winnibigoshish and Leech Lake reservoirs to the Twin Cities. This work has been done by the *Manito* fleet of the Mississippi River Commission. We passed the fleet not far below the dam. Months later Colonel Charles L. Potter, president of the Mississippi River Commission, told me how it was named.

A fleet was to be constructed, he explained, to dredge the Leech Lake and Mississippi rivers between Winnibigoshish Dam on the Father of Waters and Leech Lake Dam, the two main reservoirs, and the Pokegama Dam near Grand Rapids, the regulating reservoir of the river. Work was to be done largely through Chippewa allotment lands. The commission desired to give the boats Chippewa names. The usual fleet consisted of: dredge, quarter boat in which the crew lived, store boat for supplies, and tugboat for moving the boats. This fleet needed a water boat, because the work was in swampy country in which the water was unfit for drinking or cooking. The men were so isolated that a dispatch boat and gasoline boat to supply the tug and despatch boat were needed.

Colonel Potter and his associates studied a Chippewa dictionary not wishing to take poetic license as did Longfellow

---

## THE MANITO FLEET

---

in *Hiawatha*. The dredge was named *Manito*, and the fleet for it. Some thought this sacrilege, since *Gitchi Manito* in Ojibway is "God." It was not irreverent, the colonel explained, since *Manito* simply means "Mighty," a fitting name for a dredge. They called the tugboat *Animiki* or "The Thunder"; the launch *Nodin* or "The Wind"; the waterboat *Tigo* or "The Wave"; the quarterboat *Wigwam*, and the storeboat *Wampum*. They experienced difficulty naming the two coal flats, until they hit upon *Amik* or "Beaver," and *Niggik* or "Otter," reasoning that since they both swam low in the water, and carried the means of producing warmth, the names were appropriate. The gasoline boat was named *Narwapon*, in Chippewa "provision for a journey." Literal translation was impossible since Indians knew of no such thing as gasoline, but gasoline is necessary "provision for a journey," almost any place.

As we paddled along, the sun told us by its position in the sky that it was church time at home.

"Let's hold our own services," said Bill.

If it is true that "The trees were God's first temples," we were indeed in spiritual atmosphere. Trees banked both sides of this portion of the stream. The wind blowing through the branches rang the church bells. The river itself was the central aisle. In the sounds of waving grasses, waters against the canoe and banks, and in deep-voiced trees, we imagined we heard the organ playing Gounod's processional. The flowers seen every Sunday on either side of the altar were not missing, for a Divine Gardener had provided daisies, dandelions, blue-fringed beauties and wild honeysuckles. Larks and thrushes, singing Sunday anthems, composed our choir. The audience was made up of red-winged blackbirds, sober in glossy black plumage, with just enough red to show they were not in mourning. Swallows along the banks, perhaps not yet brought to "our way of thinking," shyly peeked at us as we passed.

When sounds of the "organ" changed to another air, the audience rose, figuratively, and, with us leading, sang:

*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow.*

*Praise Him, all creatures here below;*

*Praise Him above, ye heavenly host;*

*Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.*

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

Following this came the invocation, and, repeated together, the Lord's Prayer, after which we sang one of Bill's favorite hymns:

*Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty!*  
*Early in the morning our songs shall rise to Thee.*  
*Holy, Holy, Holy, Merciful and Mighty!*  
*God in Three Persons, blessed Trinity!*

The birds of forest and field joined in the remaining verses. A strange thing it would have been to have heard two voices, and the chirruping of birds on this little known reach of the river. Our services were simple and there was about them a sincerity and spontaneity. Neither had any leaning toward the ministry, but, out there we talked, sang and preached with no conscious feeling that we were doing anything not part of our daily lives.

For our responsive reading, we chose that best known Biblical chapter, the Twenty-third Psalm, followed by the simple song of praise, the Gloria Patri:

*Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,*  
*and to the Holy Ghost.*  
*As it was in the beginning, is now, and*  
*ever shall be, world without end.*

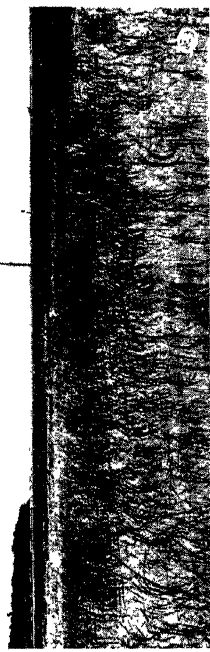
I have heard services in great Catholic cathedrals, negro revival meetings, evangelistic gatherings, Indians religious ceremonies, but never before felt so completely the force of an address to an Infinite Being. All the world seemed in tune with *Gitchi Manito* of the Chippewas, through whose ancient lands we were passing.

For our scripture lesson, we required something applicable. From the tricky resources of my mind a verse bobbed up. It was: "All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full: unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again," from the first chapter of Ecclesiastes. I could not remember the wording of the rest of the chapter, but, as it was my part in the services to read the scripture lesson, I told it in my own words, concluding as does our pastor and friend, the Reverend Harry Noble Wilson, "Thus, endeth the reading of this, His own inspired word."



(1) The Charles H. Curley of St. Paul shooting a small rapids about eight miles below Bemidji.

(3) Starting through the vast fields of reeds and rushes, with dead trees and stumps jutting out, out of which the canoeists had to paddle until they reached open water. The other shore of Lake Winnibigoshish is not visible.



(2) Indian graves on the shores of Long Lake, or, as it is known locally, Lake Andrasta. The houses over the bodies are about as high as good sized dog kennels.

(4) Part of the Manito fleet. The two large boats are very similar to the quarter boats of the Mississippi River Commission found all of the way to the Gulf of Mexico.



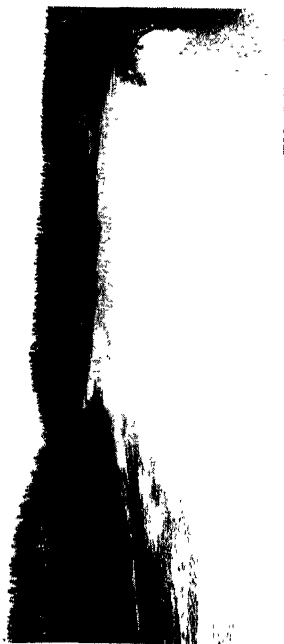


(1) An old towboat that has passed its days of usefulness. On the upper river, not many miles from Atkin, it towed rafts and booms of logs to the mills, where the teeth of the saws ate the great pine trees of Minnesota.

(3) The "Ark," a summer resort and little store on the shores of Sandy Lake, once the post of the Northwest Company and a fur trading rendezvous.



(2) Mill at Atkin, running on reclaimed logs. These logs have been sunk at the bottom of the Mississippi River for years.



(4) Looking down the Mississippi from the bridge at Brainerd, where the gorge of the river is deeper than at any place thus far, and as deep as any place above St. Anthony Falls.

---

## WE HOLD SABBATH SERVICES

---

It was Bill's turn next to act as choir, and he chose "Lead Kindly Light." That inspired Catholic churchman, Cardinal Newman, probably did not dream when he wrote it that ninety years later it would be sung by a *voyageur* paddling down the great stream of America. Silent prayers followed, much shorter than those of dozens of ministers we had listened to in years gone by, but just as sincere. Then we sang the best known hymn of all church denominations:

*Nearer, My God, to Thee, Nearer to Thee!  
E'en though it be a cross that raiseth me;  
Still all my songs shall be  
Nearer to Thee.*

The birds also sang as though they, too, were glad just to be alive. Inasmuch as there were only two of us, and carrying it out might have meant tipping the canoe, we did not take up the collection. Though my voice never has seemed to soothe or charm, Bill was kind, and none other was near. My friend for whom the canoe was named once told me that if I ever hoped to win a bride, never to sing to her. My selection was "Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep," and Bill said it "wasn't so bad, out of doors."

The sermon was in two parts, first by Bill, whose text was, "And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the Throne of God and of the Lamb," from Revelation 22: 1. As we paddled he preached, and the congregation, including the birds and myself, listened intently. My sermon was built upon the text, from Isaiah 43: 2, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers. They shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle thee." The sermons were spoken on the spur of the moment, but they made up in sincerity what they lacked in oratory. Our closing hymn was:

*Onward, Christian soldiers, Marching as to war,  
With the cross of Jesus, going on before!  
Christ the royal Master, leads against the foe:  
Forward into battle, see, his banners go!*



---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

As we sang the chorus and succeeding verses, the paddles swung with a military air, and the voices of the birds took on a martial tone, which seemed to say, "The right shall prevail." With the benediction, concluding, "be and abide with thee now and forever," services were over, save for the postlude by the enthusiastic birds. We worshipped in greater comfort than would have been possible in church. It would have been hot indoors, and the ladies would have indulged in that annoying vice, fanning themselves throughout the service, and more clothes than we had on are required in the city.

We thought of the Reverend W. T. Boutwell, who accompanied Schoolcraft, and of the hardships undergone by this first preacher to visit the headwaters of the Mississippi. The Reverend J. A. Gilfillan, an Episcopal missionary, visited Itasca in May 1881, and religious services were held there for the first time by a recitation of the Creed with surplice and stole, and a sermon, from the text, "Then had thy peace been as a river."

All morning we paddled steadily. One rapid added variety. We still were on Indian lands. We saw few houses; they were locked and deserted. One redskin, sitting in a canoe, propelled by an outboard motor, destroyed all illusions I had left about the modern Indian. Once we left the canoe to refill our water bag. As we approached a house, a swarm of Indian children ran and hid in the woods, so we hunted until we found a spring. The Indians dig few wells; most of their houses are built near springs.

Shortly before noon we reached the house and bridge of Fred Hawkins, a character of out of the way places, who is proud of his wife, a quarter-breed Indian, twin daughters, his garden, his bridge. It was completed the day before our arrival. at a cost of \$63.50 in cash, and was built in twelve days by two men. A team of horses was used three days. Piles for the supports were put down by hand five feet into the river bed. The forestry department gave him the wood. The bridge is constructed of spruce and Norway pine and is one hundred and twenty feet across.

The Leech Lake River is twenty-seven miles long. It empties into the Mississippi twenty-five miles below Lake

---

## THE FIRST UP-RIVER WINDS

---

Winnibigoshish, carrying waters from Leech Lake. Our morning's paddle was the best thus far. The river has been deepened and straightened and is navigable from Cohasset to Leech Lake and Winnibigoshish Dam for shallow draft boats. The six reservoirs comprising the entire reservoir system are all natural lakes, with a total watershed of 4,535 miles. Government engineers in 1880 recommended forty-one reservoirs on the upper Mississippi to control the river above the Twin Cities, but this plan won.

All afternoon we paddled against head winds, and had our first sample of wind sweeping up a long stretch of river. We kept on until late and were caught in the dark. We found no suitable place to camp, and, as a storm was approaching, we obtained shelter at the home of George Best, whose farm borders the stream twelve miles above Grand Rapids. Fifty-four miles this day, the best thus far!

The storm passed but left a cold, rainy morning. We got an early start, paddled to Cohasset and above the Pokegama Dam made a portage to Grand Rapids. Pokegama is Ojibway for "The water which juts off from another water." Lake Pokegama is not many hundred yards from the Mississippi and is linked by a short stream. The Pokegama Falls drop twenty-one feet. Before dams there and at Grand Rapids were built, the Mississippi began a long toboggan just below Cohasset, over a rocky boundary out of the little valley in which the infant stream had been bound for two hundred miles. Pokegama was the home of many Indians in the earlier days. The Reverend Frederick Ayer, a Massachusetts missionary, came here in 1836 and established a mission. Our portage around the dam at Grand Rapids brought us to the end of the travels for the day, near the waterfall the Indians called "Thundering Rapids." Until late in the past century, boats that "floated on the dew" came to Grand Rapids from Aitkin.

Like other towns on the Infant Hercules, Grand Rapids got its start through lumber. Knights in gleaming armor, cowboys wearing chaps, are picturesque, but none more so than the lumberjacks of the "Big Woods." They were gluttons for work, large of heart and hand, strong of muscle, fearful of nothing, spirit or material, divine or diabolical. Labor was their

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

share in life; danger their amusement. Hard work from sunup to sundown was common for these men of iron and steel, bred on bread and salt pork, beans and tea, tempered by autumn rains, winter cold and spring drives down the river.

Most of these sons of Paul Bunyan, the greatest lumber jack who ever lived, were big boys. Many say he was a man of sin. But he was a man. He thought nothing of risking his life in the icy waters of a swollen river or in the woods to save a brother jack. With a stake in his pocket and only one shirt, pair of trousers and boots, he would spend the money and borrow the price of new clothes and pay for them with next season's wages. These oldtime woodsmen were glorious savages, working devils, playing demons. Their hearts were gold, their muscles steel, their souls as pure as any man's, washed clean each year by the toil and sweat and the piney air of the "Big Woods."

My friend, F. J. Patten, who some years ago was known to thousands of Boy Scouts as "The Cave Scout," through his writings in *Boy's Life*, introduced us to Michael McAlpine at Grand Rapids, that rare exception among lumberjacks, one who saved his money. Mike (he felt hurt when we called him Mr. McAlpine) told of the days when he arose at four, breakfasted on beans, salt pork, black coffee and dark bread, braved spring flood and falling timber. He spoke of characters long since gone to a reward in a land where the spring drives never develop jackpots or form jams.

At Grand Rapids we came closer to being thrown out of a place than any time in our lives. We went into a pool room to wait until a sudden deluge subsided. The looks given us by several of the habitués of the billiard parlor explained the rank smell of moonshine that pervaded the place and also the suspicion that we aroused. A clerk removed a bottle from the counter and looked worried.

"Hey," one huge man shouted, "Whose dose guys anyway?"

"I never seen 'em before," the clerk replied.

"Well, trow 'em out."

We left the place, but went on our own feet, into the rain.

Thus far we had a perfect weather chart. It had rained sometime during every twenty-four hours of the trip.

## CHAPTER VI

*More Wet Weather; Another deserted house;  
Sandy Lake Route to Lake Superior;  
Aitkin, and Bill's vacation is over.*



TILL raining! Still at Grand Rapids! The downpour had continued all night. We had been delayed another day. Tuesday noon we loaded the canoe and started. We would wait no longer. There was a river to be traversed.

In the center of the northern half of Minnesota is a well defined basin one hundred miles long and fifty wide, within which are one thousand of Minnesota's ten thousand lakes, entirely surrounded by the *Hauteurs des Terres* or "Heights of Land," save where the river escapes. Below Grand Rapids, we were no longer in the extreme upper drainage basin of the Mississippi. Now the valley was well defined. The river progressed with new confidence. It had found itself.

Had we taken this trip a few eons ago, we would have canoed along a valley much deeper than it is now. The new valley of the Mississippi was cut by glacial flood waters, since when it has been partly filled with silt. The old valley had no falls or rapids, the new one many, caused by the stream crossing old divides between valleys tributary to the Old Mississippi.

The one hundred and twenty-five miles from Grand Rapids to Aitkin was fairly easy. We now were intrepid *voyageurs*. Shooting rapids, avoiding logs descending on the rise which followed the rains, paddling hour after hour in downpours,—this was all in a day's work. Rapport prevailed. Our hands cramped sometimes, but never blistered. Our strokes were easier and longer. Our bodies had learned the rhythm of paddling. We had developed a change of pace that enabled us to paddle long stretches at a time.

We had no unusual difficulties on the river, but had a narrow escape from disaster the first evening below Grand Rapids. It had rained all afternoon. We were thoroughly chilled. At

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

five o'clock every possible camping place looked impossible. We pulled ashore and sought a house or barn in which to sleep. Upon a hill a house reposed prettily. It was unoccupied; an air of desolation hung over it. The downstairs windows were boarded. Pushing back the storm door, we opened the inside portal. Before us was a hole blacker than darkest Africa. We felt our way in, kicked something, stumbled and fell, knocking down several large boxes.

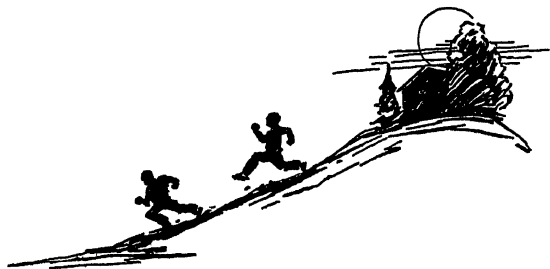
"Light a match," I suggested.

"Just a minute." Bill struck a match; it sputtered and went out.

"Light another," I suggested.

"Just a minute." Another match spit, sputtered, and split the darkness. We beheld many boxes laying all around the room. Broken ones had released large sticks which were scattered about.

"DYNAMITE," we chorused, noting the labels on the boxes and sticks on the floor. I do not know who got out first, but whoever was last slammed the door so hard it was a miracle the building did not go up in one great blast. We did not again attempt to find shelter in a deserted house, barn or building.



*"I do not know who got out first. . . ."*

The evening of June 9 was so cold that even the mosquitoes stayed at home. As we pitched camp, the sun came out long enough to cheer us after two days of constant rain. We found dry wood, built a roaring fire and prepared dinner. Then, expansive, we toasted our toes before the fire, the tent sheltering our backs. We were nearing a country more important historically than the wilderness through which we had passed.

---

## “LET’S GET TO BED EARLY”

---

Steamboats once chugged past here, Grand Rapids-bound, from Brainerd and Aitkin. Millions of feet of logs have passed downstream to the mills of those towns. Above Grand Rapids the pine had been the principal tree. Now elms, oaks, poplar and willow were more numerous. There were more and better looking farms.

Leaving our camp below Little Cowhorn Creek, we arrived at the village of Mississippi (Jacobson Post Office). It looked as though several cyclones had dropped buildings in passing, followed by persons who decided to make the best of a bad thing.

By this time three expressions had become bywords. The first was, “If we could only reach (always a new place) it would seem as though we were getting somewhere.” The second was, “Let’s get to bed early, so we can get a good early start in the morning.” The third was Bill’s, who several times each day shouted, “I may not be getting any rest on this vacation, but I’m certainly getting variety!”

The second night below Grand Rapids we camped a mile below Pokegama Creek. We were not making good time. A strong upstream wind was an added handicap to rain and cold. Next morning we got a late start. Bill had made the bed so well that we slept until seven o’clock in spite of the alarm clock, but about mid-afternoon, June 11, we reached Sandy Lake.

Sandy Lake! It is redolent with tales of Indians; missionaries and *coureurs-de-bois*. The Sandy Lake route to Lake Superior or “The Big Sea Water” was the best known and most used trail on the upper Mississippi. Before 1750, this country belonged to the Sioux, but by the close of the American Revolution, the Chippewa had pushed them west of the Mississippi and south of the Crow Wing.

The Chippewa drove the Sioux from their ancient hunting grounds and their village at Sandy Lake, forcing them south and west. The Sioux attempted to regain their lost lands and to slaughter the entire Chippewa village on these shores. But two warriors spied them, and by paddling desperately, warned the village. The Sioux might have attained their end had they not stopped to capture a small party of Chippewa women

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

huckleberrying along the river. The Sandy Lake Chippewas were in poor condition to fight. A large party was on the warpath in Dakota territory and others had just returned drunk from the yearly visit to Mackinac and the Sault. The squaws sobered enough warriors to repel the invaders, who were driven off with only a few squaws for captives.

As we looked over the lake, I visioned the stockade which was established here in 1794 by the Northwest Company. Here stopped scores of flamboyant frontiersmen, *chasseurs de l'outré* or "hunters of the outside," colorful, exotic men, unschooled in books, but erudite in wilderness ways. Men in buckskins and fur caps, Indians in blankets, squaws with papooses, detachments of the military, timber cruisers, surveyors, prospectors, they all visited Sandy Lake.

David Thompson of the Northwest Fur Company, after cruising the valleys of the Saskatchewan and Assiniboine rivers, returned by way of Red River and Red Lake River to Red Lake. He continued homeward in 1797 by way of Sandy River, the Savanna portage and St. Louis River.

To this post came Lieutenant Pike and his footsore party January 8, 1806, en route to the sources of the Mississippi. What a reception must have been given this United States Army Officer and his party. We can picture their meals of venison, bear, potatoes, wild rice, maize, washed down by coffee and rounds of whiskey, followed by songs and story telling before the open fire. The expedition left here January 20, refreshed, continuing its search for the elusive source.

The Cass party arrived at Sandy Lake July 15, 1820: members mention in their accounts that the governor was almost overcome with fatigue. A council was held on the shores of Sandy Lake between Cass and the Chippewa. The governor was armed with a supply of whiskey to aid the oratory and festivities. Schoolcraft returned July 3, 1832 seeking the source of the Mississippi.

Sandy Lake is located in Aitkin county, named for William A. Aitkin, American Fur Company agent here from 1830 to 1840. Ayer, the Massachusetts Presbyterian missionary, urged by the Scotch trader Aitkin, in 1833 opened a school here for children of *voyageurs*, and wrote an Ojibway spelling book.

---

## BILL'S VACATION ENDS

---

Aitkin considered Sandy Lake the most important of all interior posts in his, the Fond du Lac department. Edmund F. Ely, also of Massachusetts, succeeded Ayer.

We stood on the shores of Sandy Lake, comparing the past with the present. A government dam has been installed, one of the six reservoirs on the Mississippi River. Modern buildings replace old log huts, summer cottages the Indians' tepees.

The *Oriole*, said to be the last boat to ply between Grand Rapids and Aitkin, rests on the shores of Sandy Lake, a summer resort, called the *Ark*. What an end for even a little boat that once hauled homeseekers, loggers, supplies to Grand Rapids, from where they were distributed by wagon or canoe to lumber camps, Indians, and settlers.

It was Bill's last night. We preferred a fire and a talk by the dying embers, but three days of constant rain had soaked everything. We found shelter for the night at the P. W. Wold farm, in a home doubly comfortable with the cold rain falling outside. P. W. Wold was an unusual farmer; he believed in taxes, recognized that governments could not be run without funds, did not complain about weather, crops or prices, and was well informed on many subjects not related to agriculture. Mrs. Wold served breakfast soon after dawn, and we set out for Aitkin, forty-one miles downstream. A stinging cold rain still fell. We paddled first with sweaters on, then doffed them and paddled unabridged. Chilled, we donned them again, repeating the process all morning. About mid-afternoon the clouds broke, the sun came out; the trees, grass and flowers glistened in the sunshine. All day we paddled along a river dotted with logs, en route to the Aitkin mills. At seven o'clock we reached Aitkin, stowed our outfit in the Putiney barn, and Bill's vacation was over.

Bill was an ideal companion in every respect save his influence on the weather. In that he was a jinx. We had more abominable weather while he was with me than during all of the rest of the trip. It was colder and wetter; rain fell every twenty-four hours of Bill's holiday. In all our fifteen years as pals we had never been through two such weeks. Bill could handle his paddle as skillfully as Deerslayer could use his gun "Killdeer," but he did attract mosquitoes and invite rain.



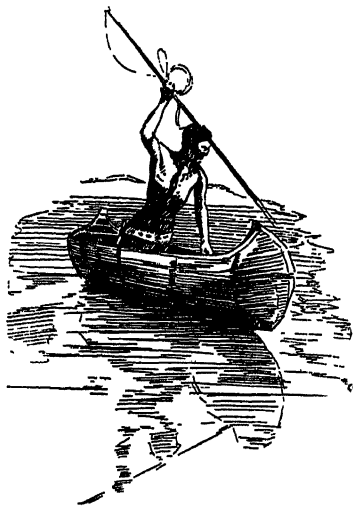
---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

We were on the water thirteen days, covered three hundred and eleven miles from Lake Itasca to Aitkin, averaging twenty-four miles a day. Of those thirteen days, three were less than half days. We had paddled through the least known region of the river. Below here would be cities, people to pollute the air, stream and forest. But the river would be always with us!

So Bill returned to work, leaving blackberry jam, rain, mosquitoes, *The Charles H. Curley of St. Paul*, and myself to continue with a new companion, in my search for the answer to "Where Goes the River." As he left, Bill commented with a dry, sunburned smile, "Now that my vacation is over, I'm going back to work for a rest."



*The proud Chippewa once ruled all of the land on the Mississippi  
above the mouth of the Crow Wing River*

## CHAPTER VII

*Richard Pattee, the new companion; Brainerd;  
Old Fort Ripley; In spite of storms and  
dams we reach St. Cloud.*



WE could make about two hundred miles before nightfall, it would seem as though we were getting some place."

The remark sounded as though Bill had coached Richard Pattee, his fourteen-year-old cousin, and my new companion. We had left Aitkin after lunch June 18, and were paddling in a beating hot sun. The weather, which for several days had been perfect, discovered we were back on the river. About six o'clock it started to pour. Mrs. Elizabeth Tuck gave us shelter for the night. Widowed, she runs her farm alone. This brave woman, who has fought elements, fortune and farm conditions, taught us a lesson in fortitude. In 1923 a peat fire burned over much of her land. In 1924 she had a good crop; the bottom fell out of the potato market. In spite of these and other heartbreaking misfortunes, she believes all will work out for the best.

The peat bog of which Mrs. Tuck spoke runs from the Mesabi range to the river, ending close to her land, near the Cuyuna range. Mesabi is Ojibway for "giant." The Cuyuna iron range, across which we paddled between Aitkin and Brainerd, was named by Cuyler Adams, who discovered it in 1895. Adams took the first syllable of his name, and the name of his dog Una, which accompanied him, and coined "Cuyuna." Ore shipments from the Cuyuna range were first made in 1910.

Above Aitkin there were no real islands. Sometimes rocks stuck out of the water, occasionally topped by a tree. Now we passed small emerald gems on some of which we might have pitched a tent.

Next morning, ten miles below Mrs. Tuck's, and a score above Brainerd, we passed the mouth of Pine River, which Pike reached December 31, 1805. Pine River carries the waters

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

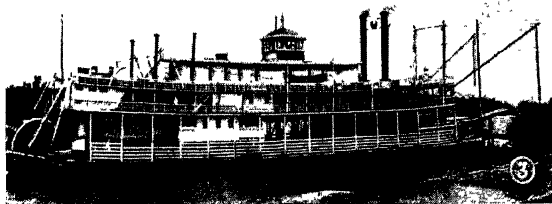
of the third largest reservoir of the Mississippi. We covered twenty miles before nooning. Our "dining room" was on a high sand hill, topped with Norway pines which afforded shelter from the heat. We looked down on a much widened valley for ten miles, and saw the river spreading out a mile wide, caused by the dam at Brainerd which backs up the water for ten miles and destroys the current for twenty. Across the lakelike waters beneath us was the other side of the valley, radiant in the varied shades of green, freshened by rains of the past fortnight.

After lunch, against a head wind, it took four hours to make twelve miles to the bridge at Brainerd. We passed crews of two men each working with grappling hooks and rigging, reclaiming logs, some of which had been submerged twenty years. Logs were pulled to the surface, loaded onto rafts, taken to the banks, dried and sawed. Pine logs will last a generation under water, if not exposed to air. These logs were worth more in 1925 than when they were cut.

Founded in 1870, Brainerd was organized as a city in 1881, and named for Mrs. J. Gregory Smith, wife of the first president of the Northern Pacific Railroad, whose maiden name was Brainerd. We portaged around the dam which lets the waters of the Mississippi down twenty-three feet, and camped within sight of it. The river here cuts through the deepest gorge we had yet come to.

About mid-morning we reached the mouths of the Crow Wing River, eleven miles below Brainerd, which we departed at seven o'clock. An island of rock formation causes a forked entry into the Mississippi. The stream was known in early days as *De Corbeau* or "The Raven," because the island was shaped like a crow's wing. Opposite the Crow Wing mouth is a long hill, sixty feet high. The river has changed little since an Indian battle was fought here. A large party of Sandy Lake Chippewas learned of the attack on their village. Unable to return in time to aid, they entrenched themselves on the hill, knowing the Sioux would return by this route and that the current would draw their canoes to that side.

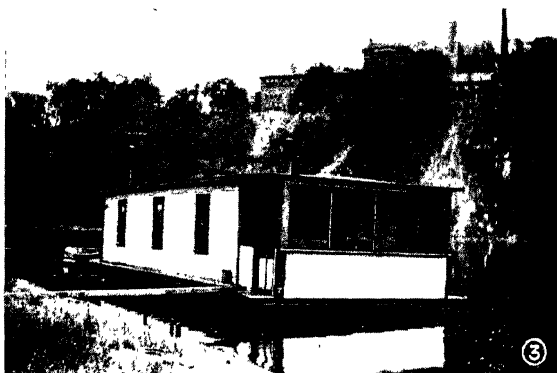
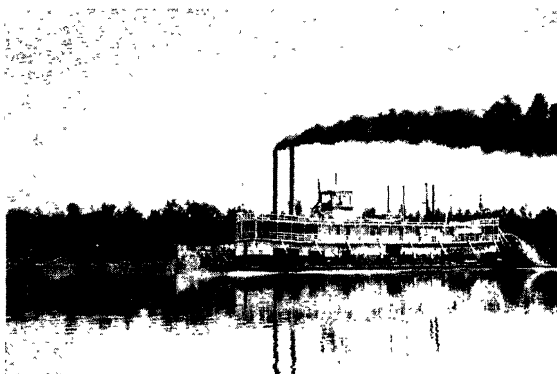
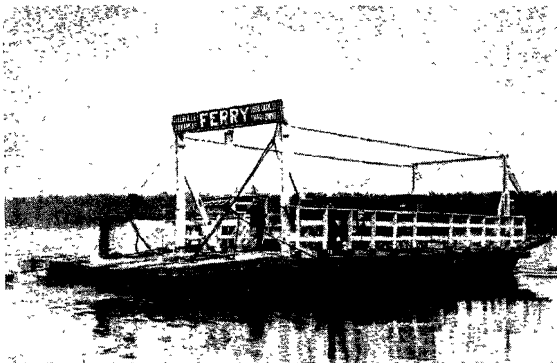
The Sioux landed and breakfasted within sight of the wily Chippewa. When they reembarked and came abreast the



(1) A rowboat found at Minneapolis, above St. Anthony Falls.

(2) Almost a cheesebox on a raft. A houseboat near the Washington Avenue Bridge, Minneapolis.

(3) The Golden Eagle, a packet boat in the trade between St. Louis and Peoria on the Mississippi and Illinois rivers.



(1) Bob Carlson's ferry at Greenville, Mississippi. It is propelled by a little gasoline launch.

(2) The "Eugenia Tully" of Memphis, headed upstream off Bruinsberg Bend, about sixty miles below Vicksburg; a towboat.

(3) The best looking houseboat of the first houseboat colony met on the Mississippi River, located just below the Washington Avenue Bridge. The housewife refused to "pose" under any conditions.

---

## MISSISSIPPI RESERVOIRS

---

Chippewa ambushade, the attack began. Fire spurted from many hidden guns. Following orders of a Chippewa squaw, the others jumped overboard, capsizing the craft. Sheltered by the fire of their tribesmen, they swam to safety. Early next morning the Sioux made a counter attack, but, at last, depleted in numbers, they were so badly beaten that they departed for their homes near the junction of the Minnesota and Mississippi rivers. After this battle, most of the Sioux moved their villages south of St. Anthony Falls.

Crow Wing River brings the waters of Gull River from Gull Lake, the last and smallest reservoir on the Mississippi. The reservoir system of the Mississippi, the largest in the world, has a capacity of nearly one hundred billion cubic feet. The capacity of each reservoir is: Winnibigoshish, 45,024,500,000 cubic feet; Leech Lake, 33,094,300,000; Pokegama, 5,260,000,000; Sandy Lake, 3,157,900,000; Pine River, 7,732,900,000, and Gull Lake, 3,091,293,000.

Late in the morning we rounded the bend in the river at the site of old Fort Ripley, opposite the mouth of Nokay Sebie River. The modern village of Fort Ripley, on the east side, stands back a mile and across the river from the fort site. Fort Ripley, nine river miles below the Crow Wing, was valuable as a threat and depot of safety, if not as the scene of famous battles in territorial and early statehood days. Only a few cows mooned there when we passed. The fort was built in 1849 and 1850, and named for General Eleazar W. Ripley of Louisiana. At the time of the Sioux outbreak in Minnesota in 1862, there was much excitement here. Though well out of the region of the Sioux disturbances, much fear was felt of the Chippewas, who gave thrills to the garrison of thirty men at Fort Ripley and chills to the settlers. Actually there was no conflict here, but the post was a haven for panic-stricken settlers.

After lunching where Fort Ripley once stood, we paddled five miles and shot Olmstead Bar and Beseau Bar, rough water running about a mile, exciting but not very dangerous. The river spreads out, is shallow and swift. We could nearly always see the bed, yellow sand and fine gravel. Some rocks showed above water; others we saw as we shot past. We did little

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

paddling except to make sudden turns to avoid rocks that sprang at us. The water runs so swiftly that to upset means loss of outfit. In spite of our efforts, the current took us much as it wished. Several times we saw a rock twenty yards away, paddled desperately to turn the canoe aside. Then, when two or three yards away, the current swept us safely from it.

The paddle to Little Falls was uneventful save that we acquired the worst sunburn of any day on the trip. We were wearing old white shirts, over white gym shirts. The sun burned right through our clothes, something that never happened when we wore flannel or khaki.

Just above the dam at Little Falls, we saw the first houseboat of the journey. It had been built, undoubtedly, to escape paying rent, for it could not go downstream without hurdling the dam, and only a few miles upriver. Because of sore, sunburned shoulders, arms and necks, and a heavy wind, the portage around the dam at Little Falls was difficult. The dam is owned by the Minnesota Light and Power Company. The first dam here was constructed in 1890. It has a head of twenty-three feet. During an unusually high flood in 1859, the steamboat *North Star* passed up over Little Falls, went over Sauk Rapids, and made Grand Rapids. Little Falls is the seat of Morrison county, named for William and Allan Morrison, northern Minnesota pioneers. A century ago through this country the moccasined foot of the aborigine threaded its silent way over forest paths or followed primitive water courses.

As soon as we had eaten we retired, and applied carron oil liberally. Carron oil is equal parts of linseed oil and lime water, the finest thing we have ever found for relieving the pain of all kinds of burns. We spread it plentifully over the red places several times before sleeping, and by morning the soreness was gone. My arms and shoulders, with two weeks longer of toughening, were not so badly burned as were Richard's, but it was evident already that I was going to set a world's record for nose peeling. Oh! What a tender pug nose. It was peeling for the third time.

We had intended to leave Little Falls early, but a terrific electrical storm broke as the town clock struck four, the hour set for our departure. By 6:30 we were on the water, hearts

---

## AN UNEXPECTED PORTAGE

---

light, aches and pains departed overnight. Our joy was short-lived. We ran into slack water; a head wind sprang up. Our charts indicated several rapids below Little Falls. We anticipated thrills. The maps also showed several islands, but, as we paddled along, fighting the freshening wind, none appeared.

At eight o'clock, when we had advanced only three miles against the wind, another storm broke. We pulled ashore, crawled under blankets, and in howling wind and pouring rain, slept an hour. Upon returning to the river, we realized there was a dam ahead. We had counted on a speedy trip from Little Falls to St. Cloud, forty miles. We learned at a farmhouse that the newly completed Blanchard Rapids dam of the Minnesota Light and Power Company was around the next bend. It had backed the water for eight miles, flooding islands and thousands of acres along the river. This dam has a head of forty-five feet. Above it the water spread out into a long lake, from which dead and dying trees protruded. By the time we had completed the portage it was noon. We ate with the crew of men and then watched them blast away rocks below the dam, to prevent backwash from undermining it. Ten miles for our morning's work—certainly the worst dam portage thus far!

Two miles above Blanchard Rapids dam we passed the site of Pike's camp from November 1 to December 10, 1805, on the west bank of the Mississippi. Pike returned here in March, 1806, after the trip to Red Cedar Lake, and waited until the breakup of the ice, when they departed for St. Louis. Pike said he would have been willing to defend the stockade against eight hundred savages, providing his entire party was inside.

Luckily it was June 21, the longest day of the year. About six o'clock a third storm broke, driving us to shelter under some trees that were growing disconsolately in the water. They did not protect us from the rain, but shielded us from the large waves that a heavy wind kicked up. Ahead of us was Watab dam.

Watab Rapids once marked the boundary line of Sioux and Chippewa on the Mississippi. Watab is Ojibway for "long and slender roots of tamarack and jack pine," which were dug up



---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

by the Indians, split, and used for sewing their bark canoes. We were in territory held by the Dakotas before the white men bought or stole it. The Sioux held sway from Prairie du Chien up the Mississippi to Crow Wing River, due west from there to and up the Red River, and westward from Prairie du Chien generally to the Missouri River. Indian legends say the first Iroquois was created by a flash of lightning, and the Sioux evolved from an egg. Many old timers still maintain the Sioux always were "bad eggs," lending proof to the legend. Perhaps the white man's fire water was one cause.

The Watab dam drops twenty-one feet, and the St. Cloud dam lowers the river another eighteen. We portaged Watab dam, shot Sauk Rapids, the most entertaining water on the trip, and portaged the St. Cloud dam. About nine o'clock we established ourselves in the St. Cloud tourist camp beside the river. It was the longest day of the year, and the hardest while Richard was my companion. As we turned in for the night, he remarked, "It does begin to seem as though we were getting some place."

## CHAPTER VIII

### *St. Cloud, the Granite City; Monticello; Anoka and Rum River; We portage around Coon Creek dam and draw near Minneapolis.*

**H**AD the St. Cloud police seen us, they would have suspected us of having escaped from the state reformatory there. Our clothes were dirty from rain and mud; our outfit appeared to have experienced a dozen cyclones instead of a few rainstorms. But we found clean garments next morning and "saw the sights."

The name St. Cloud connotes something old world, medieval, but the town is young. It was platted in 1854 by John L. Wilson. Fred Schilplin, publisher of the *St. Cloud Daily Times*, gave me the authentic tale of its naming, as he heard it from John L. Wilson, the founder.

"It was the first winter I was there, a cold year. A hired man was working in the north forty. He came in late with a load of wood. I was reading, in *The Biography of Napoleon*, of his return from Moscow, where a messenger of Josephine appears with word for her lord, and Napoleon asks, 'How are things at St. Cloud?' St. Cloud was the summer home of the royal family. At this point the hired man stamped in, brushing off the snow. I looked up and said, 'How are things at St. Cloud?' And right there I decided the town should be named St. Cloud." A contrast indeed between the splendor of the French court and the backwoods settlement.

To St. Cloud in 1862, at the time of the Sioux uprising, settlers came from miles around. There were many points in the region affected by the Sioux warfare closer to St. Cloud than Fort Snelling or St. Paul. Stearns county, of which St. Cloud was county seat, and Wright and Meeker counties, had a number of settlers near some of the Sioux activities.

The Indians knew this locality as "Me-gand-e-win-ing" or "Battle-ground" in Chippewa; battles were fought here with

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

the Sioux in 1772 and 1773. Beginning with 1854, St. Cloud was a fitting out point for buffalo hunters, and a stopping place for the old Red River carts, journeying between Pembina, Fort Gary, Fort Abercrombie and St. Paul with furs and supplies.

The glacial Mississippi was diverted from its old course and forced to flow across the rocky ledge of granitic rock, forming the Sauk Rapids and the rapids at St. Cloud. The St. Cloud dam, owned by the Northern States Power Company, has a head of eighteen feet.

Our two days below St. Cloud were easy and pleasant. We made short runs, doing thirty miles to Monticello the first day, twenty-five to Anoka the second. We lunched just above the village of Clearwater at the mouth of Clearwater River, or "Kawakomik," as the Indians called it. Here is one of the few remaining ferries on the Mississippi above Minneapolis. The country through which we passed was green from recent rains, with clean green shores and frequent yellow sandbanks.

At Monticello we looked up Albert Barker, a fraternity brother. He was away, but his father introduced us to his grandfather. "Grandpa" Don Fuller was nearly eighty.

"Mr. Fuller," I said, "Al tells me you helped dig this old Mississippi."

"Pshaw, that boy," exclaimed "The Sage of Monticello," who had just completed ten hours work in his garden, "He always did exaggerate. But I will admit I saw them dig it."

Then we heard of "the days that were," stories of things that happened a generation before we were born. "Grandpa" Fuller told of the "Big Woods" in Minnesota, west of the Twin Cities, of the pine forests that ran from Little Falls and Taylor's Falls north to the Canadian border, west nearly to Detroit Lakes. He told of days spent running logs to mills at every river town between Brainerd and the Twin Cities, of camp conditions then, when men slept in long rows beside one another to keep warm. When someone yelled "spoon," everybody turned over quickly, to give the side nearest the ground a chance to rest. He told of the days before the railroads, when Indians were common sights in every village, when there were no bridges.

---

## “THE SAGE OF MONTICELLO”

---

“Grandpa” Fuller reminded us that three centuries ago this part of the country had never known a white man. The highroads of the Indians in those days were the rivers and the greatest river in the state was the Mississippi. What a memory, spanning two full generations! He remembered when Red River carts passed, when traders set out in the fall and returned laden with furs in the spring, when saloons occupied the best corners in all towns, when the small boy’s ambition was to be a lumberjack and ride logs on the spring drive. He remembered the *North Star*, built above St. Anthony Falls in 1855 and run between there and Sauk Rapids until 1857. We talked until dark. The mosquitoes grew more merciless.

“Pshaw, these aren’t bad,” “Grandpa” Fuller countered when we commented on them. “I remember when I was young. Mosquitoes used to steal logs out of the river, and we’d have to use shot guns on them, they were so big. But times are less strenuous than they used to be.”

The next morning, within sight of where we had camped, and a mile below Monticello, we passed Battle Rapids, interesting only because here was fought one of the countless battles between the Sioux and Chippewa.

It is a mystery to me why the river between St. Cloud and Minneapolis is not used more. It affords scores of ideal camping places, with plenty of wood, water, and sheltered sites, is never far from farms where supplies may be purchased, has attractive swimming holes and a moderate current. Late in the morning a bend in the river revealed the church steeples of Elk River, famous for Charles M. Babcock, “father of good roads” in Minnesota, and for the meanest motorcycle policeman on the Jefferson Highway, which runs from Winnipeg to New Orleans. Elk River marks the site of a battle between the Chippewa and the Sioux, fought in the eighteenth century.

Sweeping around Elk Point, we passed Dayton Island, and lunched at the mouth of the Crow River, just above Dayton. South of the Crow River we entered Hennepin county. Passing the little village of Dayton, named for Lyman Dayton, one of the original owners, which was settled in 1851, two hours paddling brought us within sight of a long, low, rickety bridge. We paddled under the bridge. On the west bank was Champlin,

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

established in 1852, and named for whom nobody seems to know. The one claim Champlin has to a place in the sun is that from here in 1857 or 1858 the first shipment of flour was made from Minnesota. It was sent to New Hampshire as payment for a debt; flour was considered safer to send than money.

We paddled under the bridge, and one hundred yards below turned left and ascended the Rum River several hundred feet to the home of Irving A. Caswell, collector of customs for Minnesota, coming, about mid-afternoon, to Anoka. His son, Dwight, a classmate, was not yet home from Harvard, but correspondence had commanded us, in the event nobody was in, to make ourselves at home. Luckily, everybody was out. By the time Mr. and Mrs. Caswell returned, we had shaved, bathed, and donned fresh clothes. Aside from bleached hair, tanned and reddened faces, ears, arms and necks, we were fairly presentable.

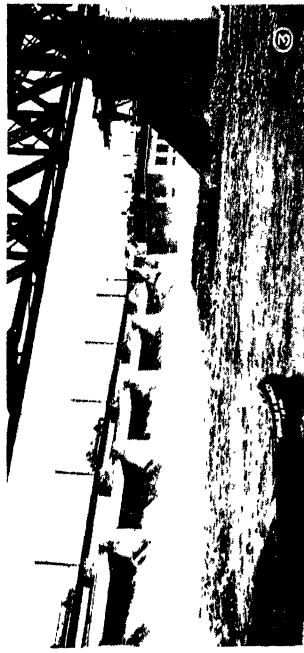
The first cabin was erected on the site of Anoka in 1844 by William Aitkin, the fur trader. Mrs. Caswell's father, Dwight Woodbury, was one of the pioneers of the county, settling several years before the Civil War. Anoka is a Sioux word, meaning "on both sides." The town lies on both sides of Rum River. Here Father Hennepin and his companions returned to the Mississippi which they had left where St. Paul stands, and journeyed overland to Mille Lacs.

Rum River is the corruption of the Indian name given to Mille Lacs and the river which carries its waters to the Mississippi. Mille Lacs was called Mde Wakan, or "Spirit Lake." Mille Lacs was discovered by Du Luth, and named Lac Baude in honor of Frontenac. But early trappers and traders called it Rum River, as rum was the most common "spirit" of the time. Later it was named Mille Lacs or "Thousand Lakes." But even Jonathan Carver, with his serious, practical mind, believed that when they spoke of spirits, the Indians meant good old Jamaica rum.

In the spring of 1680, La Salle, unable to embark on his desired explorations, sent a party from his fort on the Illinois near Peoria to ascend the Mississippi. It was not believed the river had been visited above the Wisconsin mouth, where



(1) Opposite the mouth of the Crow Wing River. It was behind this rounded sand hill that the Chippewa hunting party hid and attacked the Sioux war party en route home after a battle with the Chippewas at Sandy Lake.



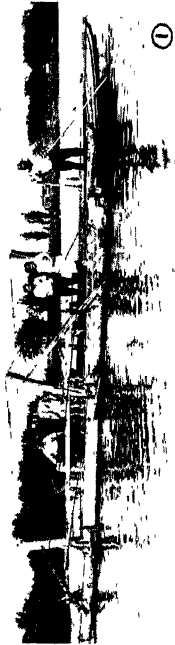
(3) The Blanchard Rapids dam, newly completed at the time of the canoe trip, and the largest dam on the river above the Twin Cities. The structure just below it is a railroad trestle.



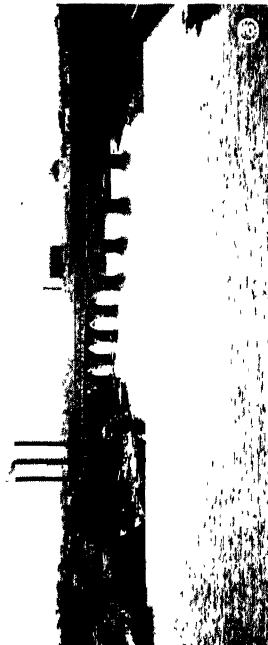
(2) The magazine or powder house at Old Fort Ripley, the outpost during the territorial and early statehood days a place of safety during the Sioux outbreak in 1862. No battles ever were fought here.



(4) The water rushing over the dam at Little Falls, giving plenty of good sport to the canoeists below it.



(1) The ferry at Dayton, Minnesota, about eight miles above Anoka, still running and doing a good business. When the first ferry at Dayton began operating, before the Civil War, there were no bridges for miles.



(3) Looking down the Mississippi River at St. Anthony Falls, which are now protected by an apron to prevent erosion. Part of the Minneapolis milling district and several buildings of the University of Minnesota may be seen on the left.



(2) The oldest bridge in Minnesota, crossing the Mississippi River at the Falls of St. Anthony, with part of the Minneapolis Milling district showing in the background.



(4) Mouth of the Minnesota River, showing Pike Island on the right, where Lieutenant Pike made his treaty with the Indians. Behind the island lies Mendota, first settlement in Minnesota. The view is taken from the bluffs of Fort Snelling.

---

## HENNEPIN AND HIS CLAIMS

---

Joliet and Marquette had entered the stream. La Salle placed Michael Accault, a *voyageur*, in command, with Antoine Auguelle, called Picard du Gay, as lay companion. The third member of the party was Father Louis Hennepin, a Franciscan of the Recollect Order. Hennepin preferred travel to teaching, adventure to giving absolution, and telling stories to telling beads. The trio entered the Mississippi, where they met a large Sioux war party seeking Miami scalps. The Sioux took them prisoners and started up the Mississippi. On their way through Lake Pepin, one of the headmen wept so copiously and noisily over the death of a son that Hennepin called it Lake of Tears. Nineteen days they paddled upstream, until they landed in lower St. Paul. They proceeded overland to Mille Lacs.

En route to hunt buffalo, the Dakotas descended Rum River, July 1, 1680, camping opposite its mouth. Here Auguelle and Hennepin received permission to descend the Mississippi to learn whether supplies they expected were at the mouth of the Wisconsin. It was then Auguelle and Hennepin discovered the falls which the latter named St. Anthony Falls, for his patron saint, Anthony of Padua. Daniel Greysolon, Sieur Du Luth, Tonty's cousin, acknowledged captain of all *coureurs-de-bois* or woodrangers in the west, soon afterward secured the release of the trio, and took them back with him to Mackinac. Hennepin returned to France, secured permission to write and publish a book on his adventures. He died in Holland in 1701.

Hennepin claimed callously to have traversed the Father of Waters from Rum River to the mouth, to have been the leader of Accault's party, and to have preceded La Salle himself to the Gulf. Historians have discredited the weird fables of this unchurchly monk, but friends of Hennepin claim that though this later book was published over his name, it was done without his knowledge, and that he did not write it. After his tales got about, Hennepin was known in Canada as "the great liar." He did little work among the Indians, but he did baptize a few infants.

On the Caswell land adjoining Rum River, there is a peculiar geologic formation. The minister of a church years ago gathered some rocks from the river there to illustrate a sermon. Little "Thad" Giddings, now Professor Thaddeus Giddings



---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

at the head of the music department of the Minneapolis Public Schools, attended services. He had seen the minister gathering the rocks at Caswell's. In the course of his sermon, the minister said, "Nobody but God knows where these rocks come from. . . ." "Thad" held up his hand, and said, "I know." "Do you," replied the minister. "Where do they come from?" "From Caswell's yard," "Thad" answered. Concluding the sermon, the minister remarked, "As I said earlier in my sermon, nobody knows where these rocks come from, except God—and this little boy right down here in front." Mr. Giddings, senior, was one of the trustees of the church, and, the story in Anoka is that the minister was not rehired.

What sounded like the world tumbling down awakened me at five o'clock. Out of one eye I discovered that it was Dwight. He had just reached home. An hour later, breakfast over, we boarded *The Charles H. Curley of St. Paul*. Dwight took his own canoe, accompanied us six miles to Coon Creek, and helped us portage around the last dam above St. Anthony Falls. The Coon Creek dam, with a head of eighteen feet, is owned by the Northern States Power Company. From here to Hastings I had walked, ridden and skied both banks of the river. It was like getting back home.

"Minneapolis next stop," I shouted as we waved goodbye to Dwight. Sunburn, rain, portages, heat, mosquitoes, were forgotten. We would sleep in our own beds this night, after six nights following such full days each one seemed weeks.

As we thought about it, houses along the banks became more numerous, bridges appeared, street cars could be heard in the distance, and Richard, paraphrasing famous words, called out,

"Minneapolis, we have come."

## CHAPTER IX

*We reach Minneapolis; Portage around the Falls of St. Anthony; in the rain we pass Fort Snelling and Mendota.*



AN HOUR before noon we landed on Nicollet Island, above the Hennepin Avenue bridge, Minneapolis. While Richard entertained a crowd of youngsters with stories about rapids and mosquitoes, I sought our "drayman." Politicians advanced this island as the site for Minnesota's capitol, when the fight in the legislature was conducted in 1859.

Although portage did mean "carry," we had no intention of parading through downtown Minneapolis with canoe, duffle and paddles from Nicollet Island to below St. Anthony Falls. I phoned Leland F. Leland, former classmate at the University of Minnesota, and said that if he did not portage us around the falls, I would tell the world that he had hearkened to the "Call of the Mild" instead of the "Call of the Wild," and given up a two-week share in the trip just to get married. He came post haste. We found two dozen boys and girls sitting along the bank at respectful distances, admiringly watching Richard, who was nonchalantly sharpening his vicious looking knife, hitherto used only for cutting bread and turning bacon. When they saw me approach they retreated. I asked Richard the reason.

"Well," he explained, "there were so many and they all wanted to get into the canoe, that I said you were Captain Kidd's grandson and that I was Jesse James' son, that we were hunting treasure that had been buried along the river. I said you were out looking for cops to shoot, and supposed I'd only be able to cut about three throats today because you always wanted first chance. When I pulled out this knife, they all went and sat over there on the bank."

I know of nothing more certain to attract attention than loading one canoe, two canoeists, a driver, and duffle onto a

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

Ford coupe, and driving through the streets of a large city at noon. We astonished the traffic policemen so that they neglected to reprimand us for crossing two intersections where the sign read "Stop."

The most important thing in Minneapolis is St. Anthony Falls. Father Hennepin was the first white man to see them. In pre-glacial times these falls were hundreds of miles down the river. Geologists estimate that it took 400,000 years to cut the channel from Cape Girardeau to Minneapolis.

What events have taken place within hearing of the Falls of St. Anthony since Hennepin first named them, July 3, 1680! When he heard their roar, he could not have dreamed that two centuries later the largest flour mills in the world would stand here. To these falls, heading the first American military expedition onto Minnesota soil, came Pike, September 26, 1805. In 1821 the first sawmill at St. Anthony Falls was begun. The first flour mill in this part of the country was built adjoining the sawmill in 1823. The two dams here today are capable of developing from fifty to sixty thousand horse-power. The upper dam has a head of forty-six feet and the lower dam nineteen feet.

William R. Marshall, later governor of the state, surveyed and platted St. Anthony for its owners in 1849. Across the river sprang up a rival settlement, Minneapolis, which later absorbed St. Anthony. The word Minneapolis is a combination of Indian and Greek. "Minne" is taken from Minnehaha, the Indian word for "Laughing Waters," while "polis" means city. So Minneapolis means "City of Laughter." But for St. Anthony Falls, however, St. Anthony and Minneapolis never would have been born. The falls gave the power that brought mills, lumber and flour, and these industries drew others. Although the first mill at St. Anthony Falls was built in 1821, nearly a generation passed before a settlement grew up, because for years the land was closed to settlers.

No more stirring day has been known to the Minneapolis milling district than October 4, 1869. Nicollet Island had been purchased by a miller who intended to dig a tunnel under the river bed from the lower end of Hennepin Island to Nicollet Island, permitting water rushing through to generate power.

---

## FIRST MILLING DISASTER

---

The limestone ledge gave way and the force of the water crumbled the sandstone beneath. Water poured through the opening, forming a great whirlpool which widened rapidly. Everything available, rocks, loads of wood, hay and straw from the marketplace, were fed to the whirlpool. Rafts, loaded with stones, finally stopped the torrents. But two hundred feet of Hennepin Island had dropped from sight. Ten days later the break again opened, but was stopped more easily. The trouble was caused by the breaking of the thin limestone capping. Federal aid was received, and, at a cost of nearly \$900,000 an apron was built over the falls, destroying the beauty, but saving them for commercial purposes. The apron was completed in 1874.

From the Minneapolis milling district have emanated some of the most famous slogans and trademarks known to advertising: "Eventually. Why Not Now?", "Gold Medal Flour," and "Because Pillsbury's Best." The flour mills of the Twin Cities, chiefly in Minneapolis, have a combined capacity of more than 100,000 barrels daily.

For a citizen of either of the municipalities of St. Paul or Minneapolis to successfully discuss the vices and virtues of the other is impossible. Those who have tried it have received brickbats from both cities, commendation from neither. St. Paul is the prettiest city; its hills afford many views. If one can escape the business district and reach such points as Cherokee Heights, High Bridge, Capitol Hill, Indian Mounds, Crocus Hill, or walk the river banks, he will find unrivalled city beauty. But if he sees only the downtown sections of both cities, Minneapolis will seem far superior, with better stores, more of them, more smart shops and a cleaner business district. St. Paul has more wealth stored away in its sox and banks, but little of it is progressive. Minneapolis is growing faster because of St. Paul's conservatism. St. Paul cannot equal Minneapolis park and lake system, but Minneapolis has no street that compares with Summit avenue. Minneapolis has the University of Minnesota; St. Paul the State Capitol.

Our canoe back in the water just below the high dam, near the Old Soldiers' Home and Minnehaha Falls, we lunched under the trees to avoid the rain, which now was falling hard.

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

The first steamboat to ascend the Mississippi above this point was the *Anthony Wayne*, which went up to St. Anthony Falls in 1850. We did not pass within sight of Minnehaha Falls, "Laughing Water," but turned into Minnehaha Creek, disembarked and walked several hundred yards to the falls. No beautiful cascade was falling, such as that pictured by Longfellow in *Hiawatha* in 1855.

When we returned to our canoe, it was raining harder, but the current was the best we had found since running Olmstead Bar, and we were still fresh. Within a few minutes we were abreast Fort Snelling. How well we knew it! We had tramped every acre, had been in every building, even, with permission, the guard house. A glamour hung over the place long ago, just as it does today, a romance that fires the imagination and awakens old dreams. Set upon the edge of a beautiful bluff, on the west bank of the Mississippi, just above the mouth of the Minnesota, Fort Snelling occupies the most charming outlook on the river, but it was chosen because of its strategic location, not the view.

What a history has this place, the site of the first American occupancy in Minnesota. What countless canoes of all kinds paddled by, what a motley assortment have passed this site. What hundreds of steamboats have docked here. What thousands of soldiers have gone out from here to the Civil War, the Sioux campaigns, the Spanish-American War, the World War!

With the influx of traders and trappers into the region along the Mississippi above Prairie du Chien, the government recognized the advisability of establishing another fort. The two sites secured by Pike in 1805 were considered and this one favored. In February 1819, Colonel Henry Leavenworth was ordered to leave Detroit, Michigan, proceed with a detachment to the new site. He went to Prairie du Chien over the Fox-Wisconsin route, and ascended the Mississippi to the mouth of the St. Peter's River, where, with three hundred men, he established a military outpost. During the first winter, 1819-1820, the detachment was ravaged by scurvy and other illnesses. Early in spring, work began. In August 1820 Colonel Josiah Snelling, hero of the War of 1812, was assigned to com-

---

## HISTORIC FORT SNELLING

---

mand. The fort first was called Fort St. Anthony, after the cascade. Such splendid work had been done by the commandant that Major General Winfield Scott, who visited here in 1824, was pleased upon his return to Washington to order the name changed to Fort Snelling.

To Fort St. Anthony, the farthest point upriver on its journey, came the *Virginia*, May 10, 1823, the first steamboat to reach St. Paul and Fort Snelling. It was a great event for those living in this corner of the white man's world, and the noise, smoke and fire of the boiler caused great consternation among the Indians. The *Virginia* was a plaything compared with steamboats that later were to ride the river, one hundred and sixty tons, one hundred and eighteen feet long, with a twenty-two foot beam.

The first Christian church in the present state of Minnesota was organized at Fort Snelling in 1835. For thirty years after the arrival of Colonel Leavenworth, Fort Snelling was the principal point on the river above Prairie du Chien. An important trading post of the American Fur Company was within sight of the fort. Near the main gateway of the reservation lived the Indian agent. This out-of-the-way garrison was the only safeguard of traders, trappers and settlers against possible activities of the Sioux and Chippewa.

Fort Snelling nearly was abandoned several times after the country began to fill up. For three years it passed into the hands of Franklin Steele, the entire tract of more than 7,000 acres going to this shrewd business man for \$90,000. With the outbreak of the Civil War, the fort was used as mobilization point for the First Minnesota, beginning in April 1861. From then until the last man was mustered out in 1866, the reservation remained in federal hands. In 1871 final reduction of the reservation took place, Steele receiving most of it, and the government keeping 1,520 acres for military purposes. Fort Snelling was a bee hive during 1917 and 1918, and since the war a \$2,000,000 disabled veterans' hospital with a score of splendid buildings has been constructed here. Each year the fort is used as a summer training grounds, and a regular army detachment is always on duty. This historic spot is now linked with St. Paul by a splendid bridge, across the Mississippi, and

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

with Mendota by a new \$2,000,000 span over the Minnesota. Another new structure is the Fort Snelling Memorial Chapel, a place of worship of all sects and creeds.

These structures are simply additional links, forged by moderns to bind more closely this spot of history with the years to come. Where soldiers, officers and commandants once walked and talked and pondered the problems of the day, where Indians and fur traders gathered, where troops were trained and later sent out to defend the state and union, all that may be added by present generations would be merely physical reminders of the romance and glory of the early days of Minnesota, when Fort Snelling stood the extreme outpost of the Northwest, a promise and protection.

Honking desperately from the Fort Snelling bridge, under which we had passed, came noises from two automobiles. Looking up we saw my mother and friends waving handkerchiefs.

"Let's beat them to the boat club," said Richard. It suited me. The current was friendly; labor in the rain would keep us warm. It would be a good race. We dug our paddles deeper.

Not many strokes below the Fort Snelling bridge we reached the Minnesota River, the largest tributary in the state. The Minnesota was the Glacial River Warren. In those days three main streams made up the Father of Waters, the St. Croix, Mississippi, and the River Warren, then the largest of the three.

The first white man known to have ascended the Minnesota, called by the Sioux "Minisoute Ouadeba, was Pierre Le Sueur, kinsman to Iberville and Bienville. He left Biloxi on the Gulf of Mexico in April, and, after fighting the currents all summer, reached the mouth of the Minnesota September 19, 1700. As is true of many Indian words, the origin and exact meaning is disputed, but the poetic appellation applied by Gideon Pond, Minnesota or "Sky-Tinted Waters," is most generally accepted. Until 1852 the stream was known officially as St. Pierre's or St. Peter's river, probably for Pierre Le Sueur.

Just below the Minnesota mouth is Pike Island, named for Zebulon Pike, who concluded a treaty with the Sioux here September 23, 1805, in which they relinquished for the establishment of military posts tracts of land at the mouth of the St. Croix River and at the mouth of the St. Pierre or Minnesota.

---

## MENDOTA, A MEMORY TOWN

---

We swept past Pike Island, on which we often had camped and played as Boy Scouts. Part of it is farmed; most of it seldom visited. The island remained government land until Franklin Steele obtained possession of it, since when it has passed through various private hands. Thus does a famous treaty grounds, on which Indian braves and government soldiers once trod, become merely another farm, another thicket of underbrush.

About a mile below Fort Snelling lies Mendota. It means "The junction of two trails" in Indian. Mendota to me is a memory town. Often have I sat on the bluffs above it, looking at the Mississippi, Minnesota, and the town below. And often as I would sit and sun myself in the summer afternoon, I would think of the spirits that hover over the place. Henry Hastings Sibley, one of the great pioneers of the upper Mississippi Valley, rode into the straggly village of New Hope, October 28, 1834, to take charge of the fur trade and post of the American Fur Company. Then there were no other settlements, not even at St. Paul, St. Anthony or Stillwater. At Fort Snelling were four companies of troops.

It is easy to picture this little village, with its collection of white and half-breed employees, engagés, Indians, traders, *voyageurs*, whiskey sellers, and soldiers from the fort. Cargoes of pork, flour and other necessities were shipped here and distributed. In 1847 a line of packets was started between Galena and Mendota, improving mail service inaugurated the year before. To the great warehouse here came furs from the out-country. Steamers came from St. Louis, with supplies, provisions, a few luxuries, gifts for the Indians, taking away huge cargoes of pelts and furs.

With the rain increasing as we paddled, on past Mendota we went, down the river, through the land of the Dakotas. Dakota means "league" or "allied," the name they gave themselves when seven tribes of the same stock were united. Ahead of us was home, end of the first lap of the journey.

An automobile works better in wet weather, and we paddled more briskly in the rain. Aided by a strong current, thoughts of warmth and dryness, we put double energy into our strokes. We passed Lilydale, and the bluffs of the city rose higher and



---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

closer. In the distance the skyline of the business district appeared through the rain. It was known to the earliest Sioux as "Immin-i-jaska" or "White Rock," because of its white sandstone bluffs. The Sioux gathered here at the Great Cave, dwelling place of their gods, called Carver's Cave now.

"Old Pig's Eye," whiskey vender, Canadian *voyageur*, and man of generally bad reputation, whose name was Pierre Par-rant, staked out the first claim in what is now St. Paul, about June 1, 1838, and built a shack which was the first house and first business building in the region included in the city of today. Reverend Lucian Gaultier, first Catholic priest to come to St. Paul, reached the little settlement in 1840. He strongly objected to "Pig's Eye," by which name the settlement was known. On land given by two settlers, a rude log chapel was built in October 1841. November 1, Father Gaultier, who had been ministering to the little settlement at Mendota, dedicated the new chapel to "St. Paul, the Apostle of Nations." St. Peter's was the name by which Mendota usually went. The thought of Paul came to mind when Father Gaultier remembered that gentiles lived in St. Peter's and St. Paul's, with Indians in the surrounding countryside. The place came to be known as St. Paul's Landing, from the chapel, and finally as St. Paul.

Down this stretch of river on which we now were paddling, Alexander Ramsey of Pennsylvania, first governor of the Minnesota Territory, was transported by canoe from Mendota to St. Paul to occupy his new home, June 25, 1849. He had been Sibley's guest while the new "executive mansion" was being completed. Canoes must have been larger then. We could not picture Governor Theodore Christianson sitting in *The Charles H. Curley of St. Paul*. Though he had voluntarily given us letters of greeting to convey to the governors of the states through which we passed, we did not invite him to take even a short ride in our little craft.

The first territorial legislature met in St. Paul September 3, 1849. May 1, 1858, Minnesota was admitted as a state. On November 3, 1849 the original plat, with some additional lands, were incorporated as the "Town of St. Paul." During the ensuing months a building boom struck the city and a traveler

---

## WE COMPLETE THE FIRST LEG

---

in 1850 said there were nearly one hundred and fifty buildings of all kinds along the river front and extending back several hundred yards.

The business of this thriving little capital was not all downriver trade for steamboats only. About 1840 the Red River settlers learned that the water route of the Red and Minnesota rivers or overland Red River trail to St. Paul was a shorter, quicker trip to supplies than the trail via Lake Winnipeg, Nelson River and Hudson Bay, or the Dawson route. After 1847 the Red River trade increased tremendously. The two-wheeled Red River cart, built entirely of wood, without nails or axle-bolts, drawn by oxen, could carry nearly half a ton. It seemed as though we could hear the ungreased wheels creaking miles away. On their down trips these jaunty *bois brulés* in their wild costumes of blue or other colored capotes of blankets, leather leggings, moccasins, baggy trousers, gay stocking caps which were often red, and cocky vari-hued sashes, brought furs. Returning the trains or brigades of carts squeaked under loads of merchandise and supplies, sometimes four hundred carts in one train.

An old city some persons call St. Paul. An old city? Young indeed it is. So young that the year after the canoe trip, and several times before then, I had talks with Bazille Gervais, the first white child born in St. Paul. He died in 1926, eighty-six years old. When he was a baby, "Old Pig's Eye" was one of his neighbors.

The river gauge this summer read a minus two and one-half feet, the lowest stage of water St. Paul had had in fifty years. The highest on record is a plus nineteen and seven-tenths feet. But we did not mind low water—*The Charles H. Curley of St. Paul* could float on a bottle of ginger ale.

Nearing the High Bridge, from which three dozen persons have jumped in twenty-five years, we saw cars stop and occupants get out. Handkerchiefs were waved; in return we raised our paddles over our heads, a salute of recognition. Then we passed under the bridge. The remaining mile to the St. Paul Motor Boat Club we made in a steady downpour, fairly scorching the river. We had stepped from the canoe and had the outfit partly stored away before our mothers drove up. Not

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

many minutes later, warm and dry at home, we were narrating our adventures. As they were not down in black and white, they lost nothing in the telling.

We were five hundred and thirty miles below the source. We had made the last two hundred and fifteen miles in seven days, an average of thirty miles a day, in spite of dams, slack water, portages, short days and storms. I had previously estimated thirty miles a day a good average. The last eight miles we made in one hour and five minutes, an average of eight and one-eighth minutes per mile. Had we been able to average this throughout, we could have made the trip in three hundred and fifty paddling hours.


Back in "the old home town," a stop was necessary to repair and overhaul the outfit, and I had several articles to write for the *Times-Picayune*. The little red canoe was not the spick and span craft we had put into Lake Itasca three weeks before. It had spent strenuous days, dodging rocks, shooting rapids, laboring over shoals, carrying the load. At night time the river had whispered stories to it, tales about solemn forests, about Indians, trappers, explorers, settlers, tales of discovery, development and destiny. While it underwent repairs, while abrasions were mended, new coats of paint added, we prepared for the remaining two thousand miles of river. Layers of skin peeled from my sun tortured nose, friends commented upon our aboriginal appearance and we liked it. 'Two weeks, and *The Charles H. Curley of St. Paul* was ready once more for the quest, and we, too, were eager and fit.



*Writing newspaper articles as we made our way down the river*

## CHAPTER X

### *We leave St. Paul Fourth of July; Hastings and Point Douglas; Prescott; Mouth of the St. Croix; Red Wing.*

OURTH of July dawn broke clear and warm, the one day of the year when it always rained. For as many years as we could remember, this had been the case. Our destination that night was Red Wing, forty-seven miles down-stream. By now the trip had become my life, the river an obsession. The canoe had been overhauled, the equipment cleaned, mended and much of it left behind. All was set for the remaining two thousand miles.

Leaving the St. Paul Motor Boat Club on Harriet Island we bade goodbye to my parents who had been loyal enough to desert their pillows at an unseemly hour. As the current carried us under the new Robert Street bridge, the court house clock struck six. The sun was up; fire crackers were popping, guns being shot. Success, we thought; a fitting sendoff from our fellow townsmen! Just below the Robert Street bridge we passed the deserted levee. For years steamboats plied the river to St. Paul, but in the past dozen years only an occasional government vessel, River Transit barges, and a few stray steamboats have docked here.

Although they were not so enormous, nor were there so many of them, upper Mississippi types were the same as those of the lower river steamboats. Before the Civil War in three decades of rapid development, they were crude boats, but were constantly improved until, after the war, on both upper and lower stretches, the steamboats really were floating palaces. With their tall chimneys, Texas, and pilot house above that, jackstays, spars, stages, they added beauty wherever they went.

Most of the steamboats on the river above St. Louis did not suffer death from boiler explosions, fire or sinking, but died comfortable old ages, were consigned to the scrap pile or turned

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

to other uses. More boats were lost by snagging than by fire or boiler explosions on the upper river. Next to snags, fire was the most important cause of loss. Wooded islands in the upper river placed countless snags in the waters and their toll was heavy. Ice, which did not materially affect steamboats below Cairo, was an important killer at St. Louis and above.

A mile below the Robert Street bridge, we started down a long sweep to the south, between wide prairies on the right and high sandstone bluffs on the left. The early French called these fields *Grand Marais*. On the edge of the bluffs is Indian Mounds Park, ancient Sioux burial grounds. At the base is Carver's Cave, once the sacred lodge of the Sioux, "*Wakon Teebe*," the "*Dwelling place of the Great Spirit*." The cave is named for Jonathan Carver, first white man who visited it in 1776. In early years of the white man the cave was called "*The New Stone House*." For a time it was used as a beer cellar—a desecration to some: to others this makes it an object of added sentiment.

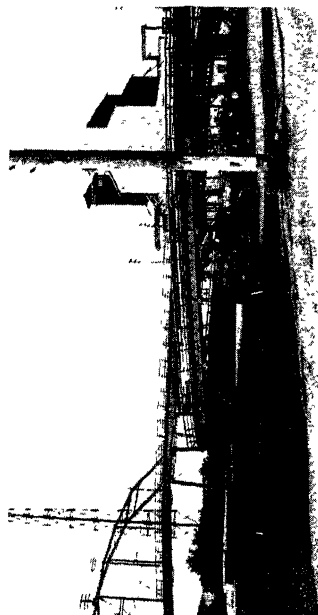
We reached South St. Paul and scurried past. It was a holiday. Neither the Swift nor Armour packing plants were running, but the shore near the plants was lined with blood and refuse. The great problem of engineers of tomorrow is not building bridges or dams, but sanitary engineering, prevention of pollution of our inland waterways. We were told that the river purifies itself every thirty miles, but when sewage of large cities and packing plants is dumped into the streams in increasing quantities, this becomes impossible.

Not far below South St. Paul and across the river is Red Rock, once the site of a Sioux mission, from 1837 to 1842. Since 1869 it has been the summer camp ground of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Red Rock got its name from an oval granite boulder which the Sioux venerated and came to visit each year until their expulsion from the state in 1862. They brought offerings and renewed its color with vermillion paint.

Grey Cloud Island, familiar to all canoe enthusiasts of St. Paul, is eight miles long by about two miles wide. It lies fifteen miles below the St. Paul Motor Boat Club. Here we pulled our canoe up on a sand bar and prepared to go in swimming. A sudden puff of wind blew the canoe out into the



①

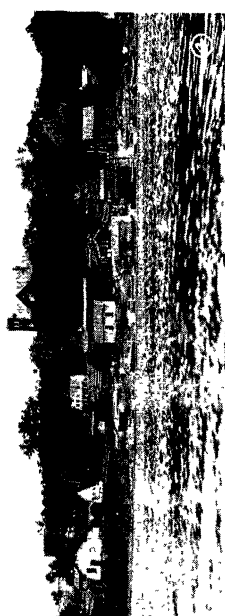


(1) A view of the skyline at St. Paul, looking downriver toward the business section from the High Bridge. The dome of the state capitol may be seen from here.

(3) The famous circular bridge at Hastings. It is designed so as to make a complete circle, enabling traffic to come right out of the business district of Hastings and reach an altitude far enough above the river to permit steamboats to pass under, thus avoiding a drawbridge.



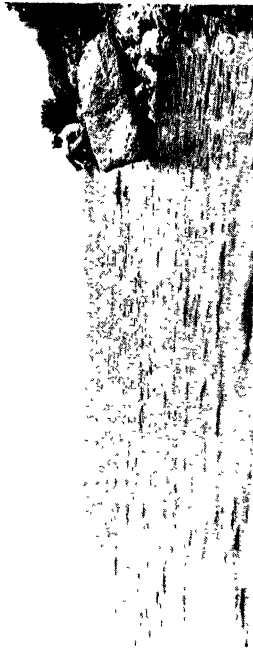
②



④

(2) From the Robert Street Bridge of St. Paul, showing where the Mississippi River sweeps past grey-white sandstone bluffs toward the southland and the Gulf. The Indian Mounds are on top of the bluffs at the right.

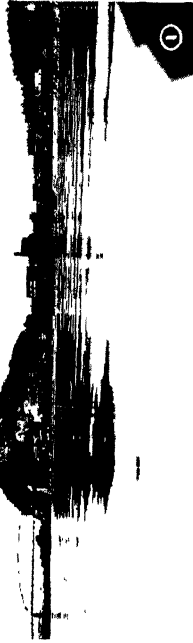
(4) Prescott, Wisconsin, the first town in Wisconsin on the Mississippi, located at the junction of the St. Croix River.



(1) Looking down the river toward Red Wing, Minnesota, showing Barn Bluff.



(2) Richard Puttee resting where we breakfasted in the shadow of Maiden Rock, looking up Lake Pepin, through early morning mid-summer haze.



(3) Maiden Rock, Wisconsin, across the lake, from which Winona jumped to her death when her parents tried to force her to marry a brave not of her choice.



(4) Pepin, Wisconsin, home of the finest beach on Lake Pepin and headquarters of the largest clam fishing fleet on the Mississippi.

---

## AN OLD INDIAN LEGEND

---

river. With only my shoes off, I had to chase the canoe downstream until I caught it, while Richard stood on shore and bet the canoe would win.

Twenty-five miles below St. Paul we saw Hastings, named for Henry Hastings Sibley, Minnesota's first governor, platted as a village in 1853 and as a city in 1857.

A legend clings to the locality where Vermillion Creek empties into the Mississippi at Hastings. In pre-white days, Sioux traveling from Wabasha's village to Red Dog's on the Minnesota, refused to go down into this valley, saying that the spirit of a giant bear dwelt there. An Indian slew the bear out of love for the hunt, not for food or furs. The Great Spirit punished the tribes by endowing the bear with earthly life after its death. The bear could not leave the grove, but might attack all who entered. White men explain the legend by saying that a large, stray grizzly, a ghostly prototype of the black bear which lived in the region, doubtless chose this spot because it was an excellent place in which to make an ambush. Others, far less charitable and less familiar with Indian character, said the Sioux, fearing a Chippewa attack here, invented the story so that they might avoid it.

Though most of the upper river steamboat captains were devout churchmen, the captain of the *Kate Cassell* loved prize-fights. He ordered his boat into a landing at a woodpile near Hastings to give his pilot, J. B. McCoy, a chance to settle an argument with a St. Louis freight handler. Passengers and crew enjoyed the fight immensely, until the captain's business instincts overcame his sporting blood and he rang the bell for starting before a knockout was scored.

On our left was Washington county, named for the nation's first president, and on the right, with Hastings as county seat, was Dakota county, named in memory of the Indian nation. More than a mile below Hastings is Point Douglas, the last land in Minnesota on the left side. For five hundred and fifty-four miles the Father of Waters flows entirely within Minnesota. Opposite the mouth of the St. Croix, which empties into the Mississippi through Lake St. Croix, is Wisconsin.

A settlement called "The Mouth of the St. Croix" sprang up here in 1839. The first post office within the present boun-



---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

daries of the state was established here in 1840. In 1849 the town was platted and named for Stephen A. Douglas, who championed Minnesota's cause in Congress. Once aspirant to the capital of the state, Point Douglas today is only a few weathered stone houses clinging to the side of the hill with venerable charm. Exhaustion of the St. Croix pineries, fires, railroads, have taken everything but a few stone landmarks to remind us of another town that once knew the good things of life.

In 1693 Pierre Le Sueur was appointed commandant at Chequamegon with orders to keep the Bois Brule-St. Croix route open by forcing the Chippewas and Dakotas to maintain peace. To obtain the splendid pine lands on the St. Croix and Chippewa rivers, white men forced treaties upon the Chippewa July 29, 1837. Tradition says that a party left Fort Snelling, where the treaty was signed, immediately after the quills had been dipped, arriving at the falls of the St. Croix at noon the next day. By night they had staked claims for timber lands and water power, first steps in devastating this country of its pine. One of the first to take advantage of the opportunity to mine the land of its forests, Joseph R. Brown's logs in 1837 were but feeble gestures compared with the great movements that followed. Lumber experts estimate that more than twenty-five billion feet of lumber came down the St. Croix. Some of the largest white pines, the pride of the valley, were five hundred years old, and cut nearly ten thousand feet of lumber.

When I was quite small, my family with friends would take motor boat trips down the Mississippi and up the St. Croix to Stillwater. From here a little steamer ran to Taylor's Falls: scarcity of water no longer permits this. On those trips, and on canoe trips before the World War, I often saw logs coming down the St. Croix, food for the mills at Stillwater, the last meals they received.

At noon we pulled up at Prescott, Wisconsin, and walked around the town. There is a fascination about Prescott. Perhaps it is the weathered stone buildings, or the tales one hears from the old timers at the boathouses, or perhaps just memories of bygone days. Today it is important only as a starting point

---

## SCANDINAVIAN DISCOVERIES

---

for fishermen after the gamey black bass, found in the Mississippi between here and Wabasha. The town is named for Philander Prescott, a man of note in early Wisconsin and Minnesota history, who lost his life in the Sioux outbreak.

Leaving Prescott, we paddled until the sun was directly above us. We ate lunch as we drifted by Prairie Island, also known as Isle Pelee or "Bald Island," where, it is believed, the first white men to set foot in Minnesota encamped in 1655. The island, which once extended from several miles above Diamond Bluff, Wisconsin, to a mile below, is now part of the mainland save in very high water. Here it was that Groseilliers and Radisson are thought to have reached their northermost point on the Mississippi, on what they termed "the first landing isle" above Lake Pepin. While much doubt attaches to the visit of these men along the Mississippi in 1655, historians generally agree that another expedition of Radisson and Groseilliers reached a location in the wilderness where Mora, Minnesota, stands today in Kanabec county, in 1659, near Knife Lake.

The Scandinavians refuse to credit Groseilliers and Radisson with being the first white men to set foot in Minnesota, maintaining that their ancestors were the first to discover America, in 1362. Some Scandinavians claim that the hardy Norsemen sailed from Norway to Greenland, thence to Hudson Bay, came up the Nelson River, crossed Lake Winnipeg and ascended the Red River to Minnesota two hundred and ninety-six years before Groseilliers and Radisson toiled over this region. A small rock with Runic inscriptions, found in Kensington, Minnesota, is the chief basis for the relief.

Two hours below Diamond Bluff, so-called because of diamond shaped particles found on the precipice, we paddled along the waterfront of Red Wing. Here, as guests of Richard's uncle, Oscar Forssell, we explored the city and spent the night. After dinner "Uncle Oscar," Richard and myself climbed Barn Bluff, at the edge of town, and beheld one of the most beautiful views we had ever seen. Toward the sun stretched the Father of Waters, a winding, silvery ribbon, which, as it threaded its way, received tribute from little sloughs and creeks entering through the lowlands of the valley. Everything was

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

green, except the silver blue ribbon, and the blue-grey sky, burnished in places by the evening sun. Across the valley were the Wisconsin hills; almost beneath us was the city. Downstream was Lake Pepin, our objective on the morrow. The river breaks below Red Wing, entering Lake Pepin through three channels, meandering between wooded islands, finally emerging to gaze upon high, precipitous bluffs.

Wisconsin, enchanting in the twilight distances, first of all belonged to the Indians. Then it was under the rule of France, England, and the United States as part of the Northwest Territory. In 1836 the land was created into the Wisconsin Territory, and May 29, 1848 was admitted as one of the United States.

At least four hereditary chiefs, leaders of the Wahpekute band of the Sioux who lived on these lands, bore the name Red Wing. The Chief Red Wing who ruled most of the early nineteenth century, was not cordial to the whites, and designated the succession as tribal leader fall to Wacouta, his nephew, and not upon his son Red Wing, who was felt to be too friendly to the intruders. The titular name of Red Wing was Wacouta or "The Shooter." The name Red Wing in Sioux is "Koo-poo-hoo-sha." Red Wing was first settled by whites in 1850. The Indian name for the site was Rhemnicha, or "Hill-Water-Wood." There was plenty of each in the vicinity. It is county seat of Goodhue county, named for James M. Goodhue, first printer and editor in the state, and founder of the *Minnesota Pioneer*, in St. Paul, April 28, 1849, parent to the present *St. Paul Pioneer Press*. Barn Bluff takes its name from its early French name, La Grange, or "The Barn," so named because of its shape.

It was easy to visualize this land in the Fourth of July twilight, as it looked before the Declaration of Independence. It seemed to me, gazing across the lowlands of the Father of Waters, that I could hear the sound of tom-toms, the songs of Indians on the island below, and see by the light of a ceremonial fire the dancing of half-naked, painted braves, bending and twisting, turning and leaping, inspired and excited by the steady, even booming of the instruments.

---

## *SPIRIT DANCES AT DUSK*

---

There is a tale that says a Sioux chief was buried on the bluff high above the site of Red Wing, dressed in his finest beaded buckskins, mounted on his horse, his dog beside him. In his hands were instruments of battle. He faced the east, awaiting resurrection day, when the Great Spirit would summon all Indians and direct them to the Happy Hunting Grounds. This was long before the days of the white men, before traders, trappers, explorers, with their firewater and firearms dissipated the strength of a valiant people.

Some say that even yet spirits dance on the island near Red Wing, by the light of phantom fires, ghostly figures performing the rites of their ancestors. No sounds issue from throats or tom-toms, and when one draws too close he finds nothing there. Yet, from the bluff that night I saw the dance, and knew it was a ceremonial to the chieftain buried behind the city.

## CHAPTER XI

*Lake Pepin and battles with heavy seas;  
Mouth of the Chippewa River; Read's  
Landing; Wabasha; Alma; We  
meet the "General Allen."*

**H**EAVY mists enshrouded us as we passed under the bridge at Red Wing as the town clock struck five. We patted ourselves on the back to think that we had chosen such a day to paddle through Lake Pepin. We had been warned by everybody with whom we had talked to beware of these waters. From childhood we had read accounts of steamboats being capsized with loss of life, of row-boats, sailboats and canoes being upset and their occupants never being seen again. My grandmother had made my mother promise before coming west to Minnesota never to venture onto Lake Pepin.

Cass and Winnibigoshish lakes had been negotiated with thrills we would not willingly have experienced again. Luck had given us a calm day for our twenty-five mile paddle down the treacherous waters of this last big lake. Not a leaf stirred: the only movement was that of our canoe. An easy pace brought us shortly after six o'clock to the middle channel emptying the reticent river into the lake, as the summer sun lifted its head over mist-enfolded Wisconsin hills.

We passed the *North Star*, yacht of the Mayo brothers, Minnesota's world-famous surgeons. Behind us, at the extreme upper end of the lake, rose Bay City, a spectral village. While we looked the curtain lifted, revealing the stage, on which we were to play the principal rôles this day. Lake Pepin, called by the Dakotas Pem-uee-chah-mday or "Lake of the Mountain," lay calm as a mirror, sky-blue, bordered by bluffs rising proudly from three to six hundred feet.

From where we paddled out of the grasses and reeds at the upper end to the tip of Point No Point, with its confusing facade, it is five miles. Point No Point appears from any

---

## BREAKFAST AT MAIDEN ROCK

---

location, except directly across the lake, to be a point, but really it is no point at all. By the time we were half way to Point No Point, the mist had flown: the morning sun flooded the lake. A breeze had sprung up and gentle wavelets succeeded the glassy calm. Rounding Point No Point, we met larger waves. Directly opposite Point No Point, in Wisconsin, is the village of Maiden Rock, named for the famous rock where we breakfasted. It had a post office in 1856 and was settled some years before then. From here we saw the full sweep of the lake, colored all shades from brilliant green and blue to mauve and a distant purple haze, not now looking like *Lac des Pleurs*, "Lake of Tears."

Just below Point No Point lies Frontenac, two-century-old settlement, now only a lake village. Here in 1727 on Point au Sable or "Point of the Sand," a finger jutting out into Lake Pepin, the French built Fort Beauharnois, naming it for the then governor of Canada. Here the first Christian mission in Minnesota was established, called by Fathers Guignas and de Gonnor, "The Mission of St. Michael the Archangel." The mission did not prosper. High water and the unfriendly Fox tribes led to the abandonment of the fort after one year. Three years later soldiers and Father Guignas returned, and rebuilt the fort on higher ground, only to abandon it after several years. Today the Ursuline convent and Academy of Villa Marie stand upon ground once occupied by the second Fort Beauharnois. Before 1850 Frontenac was the Indian trading post of James Wells. It was permanently settled between 1854 and 1857.

Below Frontenac we paddled in the lee of Point au Sable which runs half a mile into the lake. A mile below here and across the lake is Maiden Rock, famous in song and story. We struck directly across, in spite of the steadily increasing waves, and at nine o'clock pulled ashore for breakfast in the shadow of the rock. From here Winona, the beautiful Indian Maiden, leaped to her death, rather than marry a man she did not love. Her relatives had forbidden her to marry her lover and were trying to force upon her another man. The sentimental and superstitious still believe that on stormy nights they hear the death song of Winona wafted across the lake.

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

Refreshed by rest and breakfast, we pushed off into rougher water. A few minutes later we rounded Ericson Point and saw Stockholm half a mile down the lake, hanging precariously to a small level place between a split in the bluffs. Stockholm is built on historic ground and occupies one of the finest sites on the river. Named by its first settler, an unknown Swede, who came here from Illinois in 1852, it was laid out in 1858. Stockholm stands near where Nicolas Perrot built the old French Fort St. Antoine, where in 1689 he took possession of the upper Mississippi Valley and all of its tributaries for New France in the name of Louis XIV.

Across the waters was Central Point, and, stretching for a mile along the shore, Lake City, settled in 1853 or 1854. Just below Central Point the *Sea Wing* turned over in a storm, July 13, 1890, drowning ninety-seven, the worst disaster in the history of the lake.

We had intended to recross the lake to Lake City, which sits serenely in a natural amphitheater, but the wind had increased so it was unsafe. From Brownlee Point to Lake City is two miles. The wind, with a full sweep from the west, blew the waves sideways at us, making paddling extremely difficult. The two hours below Maiden Rock were the most disheartening on the journey. We made six miles, but it seemed that we did not gain a foot. Across the lake, which grew more angry each minute, was Lake City. We could not shake it off. Paddle, dip, paddle, dip, stroke after stroke, ten minutes, half an hour. Then, looking across the lake we saw—Lake City. We were making no progress or the town was moving down the lake. We watched the shore on our left and passed telegraph poles beside the railroad which skirted the Wisconsin shore. Then across the waters we would find Lake City in the same place.

Shortly before one o'clock, with the waves mounting higher, the waters angrier, we ran the canoe ashore on a place charted as Deer Island. Pulling the canoe far up on the gravel beach, where we thought it would escape the breakers which surged in like a rising tide, we laid down on the rocks and slept two hours. We were indeed Avoyelles or "People of the Rocks." A grating sound awakened us. We rushed to the canoe, which the waves had turned sideways and were break-

---

## AN ESCAPE ON LAKE PEPIN

---

ing into and over. Running it out into the water, we leaped in. During the next hour we fought without rest every treacherous trickery the lake possessed. The wind came from all directions: waves dashed at the canoe as though bent on snapping it in two. When we were a mile above Pepin, Wisconsin, a man came out in a motor boat, and asked if we were the boys who were paddling to the Gulf. We shouted above the wind that we were. He replied that he thought so, as no one else would have been crazy enough to stay out in a canoe on Lake Pepin in such seas. He offered to help us into the motor boat and to tow the canoe. When we refused the offer, he put about, shaking his head sadly, certain we would never get through alive. We were more worried about being run down by his boat than of capsizing, although we appreciated his solicitude.

Our narrowest escape of the day came at the long breakwater which stretches out into the lake to form a protection for the little fishing fleet at Pepin. We had progressed by quartering the waves which swept directly across the lake. We paddled several hundred yards toward the middle at an angle, watched for a temporary lull, turned quickly by furious labor to escape being swamped in the trough of the seething waters, and quartered back toward shore. On the last tack before gaining the protection of the breakwater, we were swept back so fast that we had to pass on the uplake side, narrowly escaping being smashed on the rocks. We paddled until we thought we were beyond the rocky projection, then turned to cross it. A furious burst of wind drove us back. The stern struck the rock: had it hit side-on we would have gone down. Several minutes of fierce struggle followed. We tried to avoid hitting again: the wind angrily attempting to hurl us onto the wall. We tore one hole in the canvas, but did not splinter the wood. A few minutes later we hauled the battered canoe up on the beach at Pepin.

This village of five hundred and fifty, settled in 1846, has the best beach on Lake Pepin, and a fleet of clam-digging and fishing boats equal to any town on the river. More than sixty boats headquarter here. The entire population was on the beach: everybody examined the canoe and outfit. A calmer two-mile paddle two hours later took us out of the lake to



---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

the mouth of the Chippewa River, where sand and gravel brought down by this stream have aided the Mississippi in forming Lake Pepin.

More logs have floated into the Mississippi from the Chippewa than from any river except the Wisconsin. Several hundred yards below the Chippewa River mouth is Read's Landing, Minnesota, one of the best known Mississippi River towns. Augustine Roque conducted a Sioux trading post here beginning in 1810. But Read's Landing, as remembered today, began with the arrival of Charles R. Read, who settled here in 1847. For two decades Read's Landing boomed. These were years when the territory was filling up, when the Mississippi was the only gateway through which settlers and supplies might pour to points north and west. Down the Chippewa and the Mississippi rivers came furs, and, in ever increasing numbers, the logs. Within a dozen years two death blows were dealt Read's Landing. In 1870 a railroad was cut through the lumber region of western Wisconsin. In 1882 another railroad was built to carry the winter ice-blocked traffic to points farther up the Mississippi. Old residents proudly point to Read's Landing as a town that never experienced old age. It lived a few years, grew to vigorous manhood, and was snuffed out quickly. Today it is a farmer's hamlet, nestling sleepily amid its reminiscences beside the banks of the Father of Waters.

Ed O'Reilly, boathouse keeper and fisherman extraordinary, welcomed us to Wabasha with open arms, proclaiming in one breath that he ran the best boathouse on the river, that his brother ran the best store specializing in fishing equipment, and that Wabasha was in the heart of the finest black bass fishing country in the world.

The town and county are named Wabasha, sometimes spelled Wapasha, one of the great families of hereditary Sioux chiefs. The town was first called Cratte's Landing, for the earliest white man to build his home on the site in 1838, but was changed to Wabasha in 1843. Wapasha is Sioux for "Red Battle Standard."

Our night at Wabasha was scarcely less hectic than the day had been on the lake, but we slept in spite of noise, heat and a severe electrical storm which soaked the country but



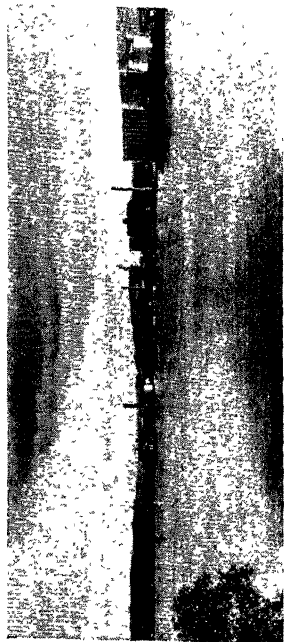
(1) Minneiska, Minnesota, and the wide lowlands of the Mississippi River, looking upriver and taken from the bluffs which in this stretch rise from five to six hundred feet above the stream.

(2) The General Allen, the first steamboat we passed on the journey, snapped two miles below Alma, above the head of Belvidere Island.



(3) Looking up the Mississippi River and viewing Fountain City, Wisconsin, from the bluffs behind the town. It is called "The Rhine City of the Mississippi."

(4) Winona, Minnesota, spreading out over Wabasha's Prairie. Sugar Loaf is plainly visible between the building with the tower and the smokestack to the right. Just to the right of the massive building is Garvin, Minnesota.

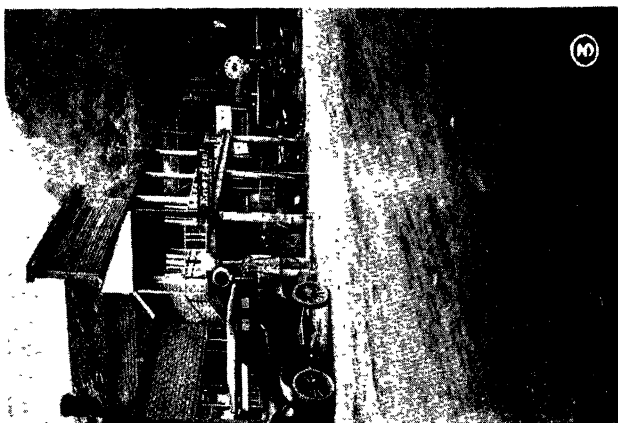




(1) Looking down upon Trempealeau and down the Mississippi River from Liberty Peak, revealing many islands and wing dams.



(2) Richard Pattee, left, and the author, at Winona, wearing their sailor hats.



(3) The main street at Genoa, Wisconsin, a little riverside town settled by Italians, still possessing some of the old world atmosphere.

---

## THE GREAT SPIRIT'S FACE

---

did not cool it. Next morning we bade Ed O'Reilly "cheerio," promising to return some day and with him catch the beautiful, bouncing bass of which he spoke in such glowing terms. These next few days we were to spend amid beauty that is surpassed on no river. For continuous beauty, no river compares with the Father of Waters between St. Paul and Davenport, the finest part of which lies between Red Wing and McGregor. Below Wabasha the valley widens to from three to five miles between the bluffs: the river leisurely swings from one to the other, between wide lowlands, studded with beautiful islands, green-clad, mysterious, inviting.

Two hours paddling brought us to Alma, a village hemmed in by great, green-topped cliffs. Alma first was called Twelve Mile Bluff, probably because it was twelve miles below Lake Pepin, but was changed to Alma, a battlefield in the Crimea in south European Russia.

There is more to these bluffs than mere beauty. One cliff resembles the face of a gaint. An old legend says that the Indians saw in the outlines of this face the features of the Great Spirit. They knew by the face on the bluffs whether they had done good and noble things. It would smile in approbation when they had done right, slain enemies who sought to destroy their homes and enslave their women, when they had performed their ceremonial and tribal dances or when they had been successful in the hunt. The face of the Great Spirit would frown with awesome scowl when he was displeased, when they became lax in their devotions, when one of them carelessly allowed some animal to escape when food was needed, when they failed to bring glory to their tribe in combat, or when dissension arose within the tribe. On winter nights at Alma they tell the children before the fire that from the bluff tops here human sacrifices were made to appease the anger of the Great Spirit, fathers hurled children from the crags so that the tribe might be victorious in battle, and the face of the Great Spirit might smile and answer the prayers of the tribesmen.

Two miles below Alma, above the head of Belvidere Island, rounding a bend, smoke belching forth, chugging upstream came the government steamer *General Allen*, the first steamboat we had met on the river. We were more than six hundred

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

miles from the source, one hundred miles below the Minneapolis municipal docks, and this was the first river activity we had seen. I determined to take a good picture of it. We paddled close, then let ourselves drift. I stood up. We drifted closer the boat under full steam passing within fifteen yards of us. The first waves struck us before I sat down. We bobbed; I did a tightrope walk before I could grab my paddle and help Richard turn the craft into the waves.

"Do you know," said Richard, some minutes later. "You're always awfully careful, except when you want to get a picture."

There are few finer sights than a steamboat with paddle wheel whirling, hurling white water behind it, black smoke and white boat, sparkling river, throb of the engines, wash of waves. River romance! We watched it disappear around a bend and wished we had lived in the halcyon steamboat days, before the efficient, unromantic, unbeautiful railroad train superceded the packets and poetry of transportation.

Buffalo City hides behind Belvidere Island, off the main channel of the river. Its name comes from Buffalo county, Wisconsin, which in turn gets its name from *Des Boeufs*. The village was settled by Cincinnati Germans in 1856. When Julius Chambers descended the river in 1872, he noted that the place had a lumber mill and an excellent beer garden. Even these have disappeared.

We were paddling through what has since become the Upper Mississippi River Wild Life and Fish Refuge, created by Congress in 1926. This extends three hundred miles from Wabasha to Rock Island and contains approximately 175,000 acres of land and 100,000 acres of water surface. The plan is to combine features of a national park, game preserve and huge fish farm. It is the first refuge where fur-bearing animals, fish, plant life and scenery will all be given protection.

The morning had been cloudy, with occasional bursts of sunshine. Just above Minneiska, Minnesota, nineteen miles below Wabasha, we had a tropical shower. We protected the outfit, but we were soaked. Two hours later found us thoroughly dried. Minneiska, settled in 1851, is Dakota for "White Water." We were lunching as we drifted past Chimney Rock, four miles below Minneiska, off which we met the U. S.

---

## SOME HUNTING INFORMATION

---

dredge *Vesuvius*. The crew, thinking they would have some fun at our expense, told us to be sure to go to the right of the next island. Our charts showed the channel on the left, so we went to the left. Later we learned that a wing dam had been constructed half-way down the island on the right and that we should have had to paddle two miles extra had we accepted their advice. We did not consider ourselves indebted to the crew of the *Vesuvius* for their kind advice.

Several miles below Chimney Rock, the river swings over to the Wisconsin bluffs. At the top of one crag is Fountain City, called "The Rhine City of the Mississippi," because of its resemblance to the vine bedecked towns and villages of Germany's great river. It is named for the numerous springs in the bluffs behind the town. It first was called Holmes' Landing for an eccentric settler who cut and piled wood here for steamboats, from 1839 to 1846, when he disappeared. The present name was given by a group of early Swiss settlers.

With one of the older settlers of the town we became quite chummy, and spent some time talking-over the town and the people. He was a sturdy old Swiss, well past his seventieth birthday, but hardy and ruddy, interested in everything.

"Ever do any hunting back there in the hills?" I asked, pointing to the great cliffs rising behind the town.

"Oh, yes, lots of it," he replied.

"What did you hunt?" I queried.

"Oh, ber's," he said.

"But you never get any of those anymore," I answered.

"Oh, yes, lots of em," he informed me.

"You mean to say that you still hunt bears in this part of the country?" I was amazed.

"Yes, sir."

"Well," I told him, "That's a surprise to me. What kind of bears do you hunt?"

"Oh, strawber's, and blueber's," he answered seriously.

Across the valley is Minnesota City, backers of which once dreamed it would become the metropolis of this part of the river. Steamboats brought many passengers past Winona to Minnesota City, which was platted in 1852 by a colony of New York settlers. This little village, with a population of

---

## *WHERE GOES THE RIVER*


---

one hundred and fifty today, barely a "suburb" of Winona, led its downriver rival in 1851 and 1852. In 1852 Minnesota City had three hundred persons living in and near it. Then the flood of 1852 came, when the river ran wild, changed its course, and left the village two miles away from its channel.

The clouds lifted after the rain. The sun beamed. A gentle breeze was just enough to keep us cool. We paddled easily, with a fair current, and in mid-afternoon swung around a bend in the Father of Waters, and beheld downriver, busy and beautiful in the afternoon sun, Winona.

## CHAPTER XII

### *Winona, Trempealeau and Perrot's Fort; La Crosse, the Iowa Line and Genoa; Bad Axe and Victory; Lansing and Mount Hosmer.*

PREADING out before us was Wapasha's Prairie, upon which stood Winona. At the lower end we could see Sugar Loaf, rising in saccharine grandeur five hundred and fifty feet above the plain. Closer and upriver was Garvin Heights. Wapasha Prairie, home of a family of Indian chiefs, was named Montezuma in 1852 by Ervin H. Johnson, for the Aztec whose people were victims of the Spanish conquistadores. In 1853 the name was changed to Winona, Sioux for "first born daughter."

Few points along the rivers of the world offer views equal to that from Garvin Heights. It seemed as we viewed Sugar Loaf and Garvin Heights from below, then climbed them and saw by day and night views from their peaks, that the scenes today must be even finer than when there was only an unbroken wilderness. Beneath us was Lake Winona, with a park beside it; beyond that the city, luxuriant with trees; the buildings and homes with church steeples jutting skyward; the winding, ever present river; across the valley the Wisconsin bluffs; upstream Fountain City and Minnesota City. I have walked along the palisades of the Hudson, sailed out through the Golden Gate when a sunset burnished the world, and driven over the Columbia River highway, but only the harbor of Duluth by moonlight from the boulevard above the city, is more impressive than the valley of the Mississippi from Garvin Heights. Richard expressed everything we thought when he uttered, with youthful enthusiasm, "Gosh, but that's some sight."

Sugar Loaf was once called Wabasha's Cap. An Indian legend says that it is part of Barn Bluff at Red Wing. In a fit of anger over some wrong doing of his children, the Great



---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

Spirit created a tremendous disturbance, split Barn Bluff into two pieces, and deposited this part where it is today. We enjoy the legend just as much when we know it is really a hill of erosion, of firmer rock than that which once surrounded it.

An attempt was made to build a log house here in 1839, but the Indians objected so strongly it was not finished. Captain Orrin Smith, pioneer riverman and owner of the steamboat *Nominee*, is called the "Father of Winona." Intending to start a colony, Captain Smith deposited Erwin Johnson on the prairie from his boat October 15, 1851.

All along the river we heard that the "good old days." were gone forever. But people of this generation seem to find life just as much worth living as did those of the past. Winona fifty, sixty, and seventy years ago, was a town of mud streets, steamboats, cabins, oxteams and log rafts. Paved streets, splendid buildings, city parks and civic pride cannot have made life less happy.

Those early days were picturesque, when Winona was struggling out of her swaddling clothes, days of steamboats and stagecoaches. From La Crosse along the river, through Homer, Winona, Read's landing and Hastings, ran the old stage road, in the decades before the war and the railroads, used most when the river was frozen. What a commotion and noise when the Concord stage rolled up with flamboyant drivers who emphasized their conversation with unseemly and fascinating adjectives, who dressed in high boots, into which were tucked colorful corduroy breeches above which were worn bright hued flannel shirts. A rakish hat topped the outfit. Frosty days and nights brought out fur coats and leather covers. The two important "W's" of the era, whiskey and weather, gave their faces a ruddy hue. Usually the stages rolled up to the levee with a rumble and flourish, cracking of whips, shouts of the drivers, just after a steamboat arrived. Snorts of the horses, shouts of the crowd, hissing steam on the boat, combined to make a stir and bustle that remained after the departure of the boat and stage.

It was mid-morning when we left Winona and headed for La Crosse, our destination that night. Along the levee we passed the first signs of commercial activity on the river, two

---

## NICOLAS PERROT'S FORT

---

barges of the River Transit Company, a small concern that for several years had been struggling to revive navigation between St. Louis and St. Paul. In an hour we reached Homer, five miles below Winona, where a branch of the United States Bureau of Fisheries is doing much to make trout and other lines of angling real sport in this vicinity. The Homer branch is the finest equipped fisheries station in the United States.

A mile above La Moille, at noon, we passed the Steamer *Capitol* of St. Louis, glistening white, flags flying, with decorations and gingerbread work, black smoke pouring from the stacks; behind all of this were the Trempealeau Mountains. The *Capitol* is the excursion nomad of the Mississippi. It winters in New Orleans, leaving in May and cruising the great river to Hastings and back. A mile above Trempealeau we passed La Moille, Minnesota, a collection of half a dozen buildings. In the decade following the Civil War, La Moille was a fairly important steamboat landing, with a mill which produced good sized shipments for a period covering a dozen years.

After an easy twelve-mile paddle, we reached Trempealeau, Wisconsin, at one o'clock, a sleepy, friendly place. Trempealeau Mountains are the highest bluffs on the Mississippi, rich in lime deposits. The Winnebagoes called Trempealeau Mountain the "Hay-me-ah-shan" or "Soaking Mountain." The Dakotas knew it as "Min-nay-chon-ka-hah" (pronounced Minneshonka) or "Bluff in the Water." And the French knew it as the mountain *qui tempe a l'eau*, or the mountain which steeps in water.

The post established by Nicolas Perrot, a few miles above the Black River on the east bank of the Mississippi, was built less than two miles above the village of Trempealeau. Here Perrot, with his men, erected a stockade and spent the winter of 1685 and 1686. A score of men with their commandant, these Frenchmen were the first to establish a post on the upper Mississippi, their source of supplies a thousand miles away, isolated in trackless forests, with canoes the only means of travel and winter making their use impossible. Another fort was built on this site in the fall of 1731 by Rene Godefroy, sieur Linctot, who, his reports say, built a fort at a place called

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

*La Montagne qui tempe dans l'Eau.* The last herd of buffalo seen east of the Mississippi was on Trempealeau prairie in 1832.

Four hours paddling after leaving Trempealeau, in the soft summer sun, brought us to La Crosse, the largest Wisconsin city on the Mississippi. Below Trempealeau the bluffs swing back from the river on the Wisconsin side, leaving lowlands all the way to La Crosse; on the Minnesota side the bluffs rise so sharply from the river as barely to leave room for the railroad tracks at their bases.

La Crosse had a colony of houseboats. We found shelter between two of them, left our canoe and duffle at one and started out to find friends. It was just six o'clock when we got uptown; most of the business houses were closed. As I wanted to telephone we stepped into a tombstone establishment, where despite our vagabond appearance, the proprietor was most gracious. He listened to the conversation and heard me tell my friend about the journey. All about were tombstones, decorated, plain, polished, uncut, and the highest powered salesman I have ever met. With as little delay as possible, I completed the call, thanked the owner and started to leave.

"Pardon me, my young friend," said the proprietor. "You know, sir, you are taking a very dangerous trip. Anything might happen. I hope nothing will, but things do, you know, in spite of all we can do. Life is so uncertain." He lifted his eyes to the cobwebbed ceiling, evidently thinking of heaven. "What I should like to do is to sell you a little tombstone. A part payment will do, with installments at convenient times. In case your body is lost, we will ship the stone to your home and it can be erected there as a memorial. In case your body is sent home, if we are notified, the stone will be there ahead of it."

He rubbed his hand delicately over the polished surface of a stone. My red nose and face paled perceptibly as I contemplated the cheerful salesman. He then recited a tale of danger and disaster, painting so vividly my probable demise that I almost sold canoe, contents and companion, purchased a tombstone and returned home to await a chance to use it. But a possible distant death cannot compete with a nearby

---

## AN ITALIAN SETTLEMENT

---

certain meal: our stomachs told us it was mealtime, and a few minutes later a bountiful banquet dispelled any apprehensions the tombstone salesman had created.

In 1851 two traders brought goods to the prairie where La Crosse now stands. The prairie later was settled by residents of New Hampshire, Vermont and New York. La Crosse takes its name from the Indian game, which is the national game of Canada. This prairie formerly was a neutral ground, where the tribes gathered and engaged in *la crosse* and other contests. There is a legend that La Crosse was named for the French *La Croix*, from a cross erected here by the Indians over the grave of a missionary: this is only a legend.

Across from La Crosse is La Crescent, a half-forgotten boom town of ante-bellum days, noted now only as the place where one crosses the river en route to St. Paul over the Mississippi River Scenic Highway.

We were ready to leave La Crosse by seven the next morning; a threatened storm caused us to delay until nine. Then the clouds appeared to be lifting. A base deception! Half a mile below the city we ran into such a rainstorm that we thought constantly of the tombstone salesman. After an hour's downpour the clouds dispersed, leaving a sultry, humid day. By noon we were thoroughly baked and the outfit dry. On our right was the last county in Minnesota, named for Sam Houston, president of the Lone Star Republic and later senator from Texas.

Genoa, Vernon county, seventeen miles below La Crosse, on the east bank, is another Mississippi bluff town. We reached it at one o'clock. Genoa is a clam fishing settlement of Italian origin, a bit of Mediterranean beside the Mississippi. When it was laid out in 1854, Genoa was called *La Mauvaise Hache* or Bad Axe. The first settlers, Italian immigrants who came to America to secure freedom, in 1868 changed the name to Genoa to honor their birthplace. Olive skins, glossy black hair, snapping black eyes of the residents showed the southern European influence. Many knew Italian well, but all with whom we talked spoke English and the latest slang.

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

Just below Tippet's Landing, two hours later, Minnesota gave way to the third state of the journey. For six hundred and ninety-two miles the North Star state had been on our right, ancient battleground of Chippewa and Sioux, Land of Lakes. The "Hawkeye State" was on our right. Iowa, now famous for corn and hogs, was organized as a territory June 12, 1828, with Burlington the first capital. Iowa was admitted as a state December 28, 1846.

The Ioway or Iowa tribe roamed the hills and prairies between the Father of Waters and Missouri, from the lead mines south to the Des Moines River. One authority says that the word Iowa or Ioway means "Sleepy Ones" or "Drowsy Ones," but the most common translation is "This is the Land." There were also Pottawattamies, Musquezkies and Foxes in this region, and Sacs along the Mississippi.

Victory in Wisconsin, one mile below the Iowa state line, was laid out in 1852, and has grown little in seven decades. It snuggles along the craggy heights, undisturbed by progress or people. Near here a well-armed troop of soldiers and militia gained a "great victory" over the sorry remnant of red men. The Indian chief, Black Hawk, was beaten within sight of the present town August 1, 1832.

A five-mile paddle through the wide, islet-studded river brought us to De Soto, big as a minute. It is a "village of cliff-dwellers," an old settlement made up of a group of New England Yankees, some of them Nantucket sea-captains. The site was known first as Winneshiek's Landing, for the old Winnebago chief whose lodges once stood here. In the hills back of De Soto, overlooking town and valley, is the reputed grave of Minnehaha, "Laughing Water," heroine of *Hiawatha*. The most famous bottomlands on the river, Winneshiek Bottoms, extend from De Soto twenty miles downstream to Lynxville. For several years a bitter fight raged over these lands between the Izaak Walton League and the real estate interests. Realtors wished to drain and convert them into farms, for they are exceptionally rich. But the Izaak Walton League and other far seeing organizations, have succeeded in having the lands made part of the federal preserve. While we were paddling above Lansing, Iowa, we saw a rabbit

---

## AN AQUATIC RABBIT

---

swimming. Thinking it would drown, we made a number of efforts to catch it, but it evaded us and made the shore of an island, shook itself, contemptuously looked us over and loped into the woods. Ordinarily rabbits cannot swim, but this was a type of swamp rabbit that inhabits the bottoms, large and a good swimmer.

For some miles we had followed the Wisconsin shore. At De Soto the river swings across the bottoms to Lansing, where the bluffs are three miles apart. Below Lansing the channel hugs the Iowa shore for ten miles, then sweeps east to the Wisconsin bluffs through Crooked Slough to Lynxville. Employees of the Iowa State Fish and Game department, and R. G. Miller, a local banker, welcomed us to Lansing, "The Little Switzerland of Iowa."

Mount Hosmer is the most interesting thing at Lansing. Mr. Miller insisted that we climb it at once, to enjoy its various moods at sunset. Our muscles were used to paddling, not mountain climbing, but with difficulty we managed to maintain the pace our host set. At the summit, in spite of mosquitoes, mugginess and muscles, the labor was lavishly rewarded. We could see the great valley, with its stream, serpentine and silvered, winding upriver and Gulfward. We could see the misty, purple, twilight-grey bottomlands between us and the Wisconsin bluffs. We could see a road winding back into interior Allamakee county. From one point, where the wind cooled us as it drove away some of the mosquitoes, we looked directly down on the town and saw the houses being lighted one by one, and the several churches with their spires pointing night heavenward. A post office was established here in 1849, and the town was platted in 1851.

From Mrs. Martha L. Hemenway, I learned about the naming of Mount Hosmer. When we visited Lansing, she was eighty-five years old. She had lived there more than three-fourths of a century. Her memory was remarkably clear and accurate. In 1842 and 1843 Mrs. Hemenway's father, John Haney, Sr., was living on the Kickapoo River with his family, twenty-eight miles northeast of Prairie du Chien, due east of Winneshiek, the only white settlers in the region. Becoming weary of the isolation and privations of life on the Kickapoo,

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

Haney sold his Wisconsin possessions and selected a place on the Mississippi where the main channel touched the west shore, the only place in miles it did this. The Haney's arrived in April 1848. When the land was opened up, John Haney and Horace H. Houghton, editor of the *Galena Gazette*, purchased it. The town of Lansing was platted in 1851 by John Haney and his partner.

Mrs. Hemenway said that the name of Winneshiek was applied from the first to the country all around Lansing, especially to the bottoms. She spoke of the hunting in her younger days, when geese and ducks fed upon the wild rice in the bottomlands, and when they came in such flocks they clouded the sky. She remembered an old trader at Winneshiek, now called De Soto, who sold liquor to the Indians. She attributes the downfall of the red men to their love of "fire water." She has seen Indians barter everything they had, even their blankets, to buy spirits from the whites.

Mrs. Hemenway is the only person still living who was present on that day so famous in Lansing history, when Mount Hosmer was named. I have set down the story as she told it to me.

"I remember it well," Mrs. Hemenway said. "It was June 1851, when Miss Hosmer made her memorable ascent of the now famous bluff. She was taking a trip up the river on Captain Orrin Smith's steamboat, the *Senator*. I was ten and one-half years old and much interested. The crew was taking on wood. Mr. Houghton had arrived on the boat and gone to our home for breakfast: it was quite early in the morning. Miss Hosmer, a well known eastern artist, came out onto the bow of the boat and was talking with the captain about the beautiful scenery. She asked Captain Smith how long they were going to stay.

"'As long as you wish,' he replied gallantly.

"'Will I have time to climb that bluff?'

"'We will give you time.'

"Captain Smith called a clerk to accompany her. She soon outdistanced him, and stood alone on the brow of the hill, waving her handkerchief to the stewardess, who was on the guard of the boat, ringing the breakfast bell. Coming

---

## NAMING OF MOUNT HOSMER

---

down she met her escort half-way up. She ran gleefully past him, returning the victor in the race. Before he went back to the boat, the clerk asked her to wait while he went to our house. There he interviewed the proprietors. Fortunately both were present. He asked whether the bluff had a name, and was told "not as yet," Then he requested that the bluff be named Mount Hosmer, in honor of the lady who had just made a record ascent. Miss Hosmer seemed very pleased when told what had happened, but not greatly flattered. She probably did not realize that the old bluff would stand a living memorial to her, long after she had gone to her last rest. This was quite an event and a very happy experience in my rather uneventful life. I still have a vivid recollection of the bright young girl who chatted so pleasantly with me about the wild strawberries and flowers growing near."

Thus we heard from the last living witness, the true story of the naming of Mount Hosmer.



## CHAPTER XIII

### *Lynxville, Prairie du Chien and Showboats; McGregor; The Wisconsin River Mouth; Guttenberg and Dubuque.*

**T**HE NIGHT at Lansing was muggy; with what chance there was to sleep ruined by a crashing, crackling, electrical storm. At four-thirty we were sitting in a doorway, watching the rain descend in torrents. It was a cadaverous morning. Five o'clock found us sleeping back to back, with one another's shoulders for pillows. At six o'clock we headed for Prairie du Chien in a drizzle, the air still hot and sticky. Lansing was sound asleep. Morning after morning we passed slumbering cities, in rain or mist or sun-bathed, until the river became a stream of sleeping cities. No one knows the full beauty of the river until he has paddled past a dreaming, dew-laden city.

I had hoped for a fair day so that we might get good pictures at Prairie du Chien and McGregor. There was no excuse for such weather, I reflected. Silly thing, rain, to fall, wear away soil, evaporate, fall and rush to sea or be evaporated again, over and over.

Through the Winneshiek Bottoms the current is fairly strong, and we reached Lynxville for breakfast. Lynxville settles in a crevice in the bluffs, and was first called Haney's Point, for an early settler. We asked one man how the town was named. He replied, "There was once a lotta lynxes in this here part of the country." It was named for a famous early Mississippi River steamboat, *The Lynx*.

Our course from La Crosse to Prairie du Chien was along a deeply worn channel, which wound circuitously amidst islands. As the day wore on the clouds broke and disappeared. About noon we saw in the distance the castellated walls and bold escarpments rising behind the wide fields on which reposes Prairie du Chien. At noon we reached the city which stands on the "Prairie of the Dog." It is two hundred years old and

---

## TWO FUTURE PRESIDENTS

---

looks it. A touch of sadness hangs over the place, yet it is filled with beautiful memories. *Coureurs-de-bois*, adventurers, missionaries, explorers, passed and repassed here years before there was a United States. In 1686 the first post, called Fort St. Nicholas, was built on the outskirts of the present city, but soon was abandoned.

The first record of a permanent settlement here is that of three Frenchmen, Antaya, Giard and Ange in 1781. The "Prairie of the Dog" was a neutral trading place for the Indians during the eighteenth century. By the river once stood buildings of the Astor and Northwest companies: to this village came the furs of the far upper country. Where smoke curled from tepees, where squaws prepared food for their braves and papooses, where mongrel dogs barked, where missionaries attempted to Christianize, where *coureurs-de-bois* spent their leisure hours, where traders haggled over prices and were assisted in making their bargains with the Indians by rum, a city now stands. Only the everlasting bluffs, the prairie, and the river have seen all of the changing panorama of life here.

Prairie du Chien was the highest point on the river where fighting took place in the War of 1812. Within three months after Great Britain declared war in June 1812, American posts at Mackinac, Detroit and Chicago were captured. Early in 1813 a stockade was erected at Prairie du Chien and named Fort Shelby. In 1814 Colonel William McKay, with a detachment of soldiers and one thousand Indians, forced its surrender. Not until May 24, 1815, eight months after the signing of the Treaty of Ghent, did the British flag come down from the post at Prairie du Chien. The fort was rebuilt near the site of Fort Shelby completed in 1816, and named for William H. Crawford, secretary of the treasury under President Monroe.

Two future presidents, one of the United States and the other of the Confederacy, were stationed at Fort Crawford. Colonel Zachary Taylor was commandant; Lieutenant Jefferson Davis, one of his under officers. Here sprang up the strange, strong hatred between the colonel and his officer, and the poignant, beautiful love between Sarah Knox Taylor, the commandant's daughter, and Davis. Zachary Taylor wished his daughters not to marry into the army. Sarah Knox Taylor

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

fell in love with the dashing, chivalrous southerner, and he with her. Colonel Taylor secured Davis' transfer in 1834 to Fort Given, Arkansas. Davis resigned in 1835 and returned to Prairie du Chien. Eloping on a steamboat, the future Confederate president and Sarah Knox Taylor were married and went to his plantation, "Brierfield," near Vicksburg. Six months later the bride contracted fever and died.

Fort Crawford was abandoned in 1856. Since then Prairie du Chien has declined. Once *entrepôt* of the upper river, once scene of an army outpost, once terminus of a railroad, it is no place today for the person who cannot weave into yellowed buildings, crumbled foundations, and atmosphere, the loves, labors, romance and heartaches of a bygone century.

On our way back to the canoe, we heard the shrill, flutey pipings of a steam calliope. Thousands of music lovers declare that sounds thrust from a calliope are not music, but I confess a childish fondness for them. As a boy I would follow one for blocks, enthralled. Our steps quickened. At the landing we saw emblazoned in large letters across an enormous boat, *French's New Sensation*. Swarms of fascinated children were perched along the river edge. *French's New Sensation*, a showboat, works the Mississippi from Hastings to points below Baton Rouge, bringing drama and vaudeville to out-of-the-way villages and landings along the Mississippi and its tributaries.

We can trace the faint, feeble beginnings of showboats to the dim period in the decade after Jefferson purchased Louisiana. In 1817 an actor named Ludlow crossed the Blue Ridge to the Cumberland River, built a house on a keelboat and drifted down the Cumberland, Ohio and Mississippi. He was the first showboatman of the Mississippi Valley. By 1861 showboats had developed in numbers, acquired unsavory reputations and become financial successes. During the Civil War all were tied up. First the boats drifted downstream, manned by sweeps; they were towed up at the end of the season. When larger boats were built, steamboats were needed to handle them.

Showboats play seven nights a week with no matinees. They visit the towns on the Kanawha and Monongahela rivers

---

## OUR FIRST SHOWBOAT

---

when the steel mills are running full force in the spring, the Ohio in early summer, the upper Mississippi in August and September, the Tennessee and lower Mississippi during cotton



*"Five-forty found us pushing out into a foggy, mist-enshrouded river."*

picking time in the fall. During the three winter months they usually dock at some Ohio River town. For fifty years French's "New Sensations" have been making annual pilgrimages on the Ohio, Mississippi, and Louisiana bayous. Boats show at places ranging from landings in Arkansas to towns as large as Cape Girardeau.

An hour after leaving Prairie du Chien, we had paddled to McGregor, Iowa, visited the "Pocket City," located in an amphitheater, and climbed McGregor heights. Stretching before us was one of the most impressive sights any river can offer. Far downstream, glistening in the afternoonglight, the Wisconsin River joined the Mississippi. Numerous islands dotted the brilliant waters at the junction. Directly across was Prairie du Chien, spreading in careless charm, the bluffs near enough to protect without crowding. Across the river over the island runs a railroad bridge, one of two pontoon bridges on the Mississippi; the other is at Read's Landing. No stretch along the majestic river is more mountainous or rocky than near McGregor.

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

Our morning's worries were forgotten. A light breeze had dispelled fog and mist. A few white clouds added contrast to the blue of the sky. Mid-afternoon found us back in "Watch-kat-o-que" or "The Big Canoe," as the Indians would have called *The Charles H. Curley of St. Paul*. Fishing boats were putt-putting their homeward way, the exhaust echoing against the bluffs which hung close to the river on our right.

Half an hours paddling brought us to the mouth of the Wisconsin, the largest tributary thus far. It runs in across yellow sandbars. Little tree-topped islands stand in the stream; shallows and deeps alternate. Earliest spellings of Wisconsin were "Miscousing" and "Ouischonching." The exact meaning is not known. Many declare it means "The gathering of the waters," or "The meeting of the waters," and refers to the occasional mingling of the smaller streams at the upper watershed, which sends waters into Lake Michigan through the Fox River and into the Mississippi down the Wisconsin.

Here, three days travel below the portage from the Fox River, Louis Joliet and Father Jacques Marquette saw the Mississippi June 17, 1673. A month before they had left the mission at St. Ignace. Their diaries noted that Indians said that the "Mechassipi" or "Micissipi" had its origin in various lakes in the country of the tribes to the north, the first detailed reference to the Mississippi's source. They named the river "Conception" in honor of the Holy Virgin whom Marquette worshipped. Joliet was leader; Marquette kept the diary and log, which explains his preeminence in history. Joliet's canoe upset in the La Chine rapids above Montreal, and he saved only his life. Marquette published papers, giving the incorrect impression that he headed the expedition. He really was only the missionary assigned to accompany Joliet.

Six miles below McGregor we passed Sny Magill Creek, first called Chenaille a Magill, "The Slough of Donald Magill," a Scotch trader who built a house here in 1814. The name was corrupted to "Sny." We passed the dredge *Aetna* off the "Sny" and a mile downstream stopped at Clayton, Iowa, a village of one hundred and fifty persons. After eating here we suddenly decided to make Guttenberg, Iowa, by night. It was eight o'clock and dark when we arrived, but the mosquitoes found

---

## A LITTLE BIT OF GERMANY

---

us. We stopped to chat with a group of old German fishermen who were vigorously smoking along shore. They said that the mosquitoes were the worst they had been in twenty-five years, the summer hotter, the river more dangerous and fishing worse.

Guttenberg, with the bluffs rising several hundred yards behind the town, sets on a little flat space opposite many islands on an old channel of the river. In many Minnesota towns it is common to hear Scandinavian and French in Louisiana rural districts. In Guttenberg we heard as much German as English in the stores and on the streets. Husbands, wives and children walked the streets, stopping to talk with other husbands, wives and children. Fathers smoking long German porcelain painted pipes and fraus adorned with shawls, in spite of the heat, laughed and talked. As we strolled past open windows we saw steins on the tables. We did not ascertain their contents, but imagined the pipes contained tobacco.

In an ice cream parlor we saw the younger people of the town, a far cry from older to younger generation. The books they carried, magazines for sale in the racks, phonograph records that were played while ice cream and the newest soft drinks were consumed, proved that the younger generation had been Americanized with a vengeance. None of the German of Schiller or Goethe was here; none of the American of Whistler or Henry James. The influence of Irving Berlin and Harold Bell Wright was obvious.

In spite of our sightseeing between Lansing and Guttenberg, we made forty-eight miles. Our destination on the morrow was Dubuque, thirty-seven miles downstream. We were making better time now than on the upper stretches, with better current, no portages, and longer hours. The river flows through a rock-walled, steep-sided valley from four to five hundred feet deep and one to three miles wide in this stretch.

Five-forty found us pushing out into a foggy, mist-enshrouded river. Many islands accelerate the current along this reach. We had waited, thinking the fog would lift, and for a moment we had seen what seemed to be the sun. But once out on the water, we lost sight of everything, except the canoe and ourselves. The only thing to do was to steer until we found

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

the direction of the current. I thought of Huck Finn's remark about a fog, "It's mighty fidgety business to set still and hold your hand still at such a time." It certainly was! I guided the canoe into what seemed the middle of the river. We paddled a few strokes, then let the current take us along, giving us the general direction again, and repeated the process. For fleeting seconds a dim, yellow disc appeared in the east; then the grey white mist blotted it out. Our canoe was wet with the fog. The air was heavy and close.

The water gurgled, swirled and sped us along. On our right a sound of rushing water grew louder, then fainter. "Wing dam," said Richard. We could not see the length of the canoe. It seemed that a shadow, a ghost, was with me in a phantom canoe. Richard's voice through the oppressive veil sounded other-worldly. The wing dam of which Richard spoke is one of hundreds built between Fort Snelling and the Missouri, constructed to direct the river so as to deepen the channel. Made of willows, sunk by large rocks, they extend into the river from a few rods to several hundred yards. In some reaches we never were out of sight of wing dams. Once or twice we narrowly averted upsetting on the ends, when the last few yards were submerged. We had enjoyed skirting the ends of the dams; the current was better and we could travel faster. After experiencing the sinking sensation when a loose willow or rock had grated on the canoe, we kept well away from them.

Through the fog we caught a glimpse of a shore sign. We started in the direction it indicated. Then the fog closed down as tightly as doors are padlocked under prohibition laws. The current gripped us harder; we dug our paddles deeper. Out of this blank grey came sounds of rushing waters, as of a falls or rapids. There were none on this stretch of the river. I turned the canoe, attempting to angle across the river. The current pulled harder. The noise increased. We were powerless now as is a baby in a crib to put out a fire.

The noise broke into a roar; a low wall, three or two feet sprang at us out of the fog, a solid, bulky wall, hurling itself upstream at us. We were hurtling downriver at what seemed express train speed. A wing dam! "On the Rocks" ever since has meant more than a slang expression. It leaped at us as



(1) Trempealeau, from Liberty Peak of the Trempealeau Mountains, looking downriver, showing the railroad train starting the river, the Minnesota bluffs, widening of the bottomlands into the once famous Trempealeau prairie.



(3) French's New Sensation, one of the oldest troubadors on the Mississippi River, at Prairie du Chien landing.



(2) Richard Pattee, looking up the Mississippi from the dock at Trempealeau. The well-packed canoe now has the duffie stowed low and evenly, after many experiments in packing.



(4) Ruins of old Fort Crawford at Prairie du Chien, once the outpost of the upper Mississippi.





(1) The pontoon bridge at Prairie du Chien, one of the two on the river. The other is at Read's Landing, Minnesota. The span is opened and closed by a steamboat.



(3) From the heights at McGregor, Iowa, looking across the Father of Waters to Prairie du Chien and the Wisconsin Bluffs. McGregor Island, with McGregor Lake or Lotus Lily Lake, is shown separating the Mississippi into two channels.



(2) The ferries Rob Roy II and Wanamingo run between Prairie du Chien and McGregor. Here the Wanamingo is being loaded. The cars run on, are turned on a table and backed into place.



(4) From "Pike's Peak" below McGregor, Iowa, opposite the mouth of the Wisconsin, with Prairie du Chien across the Mississippi.

---

## THROUGH A WING DAM

---

fast as insurance payments come due. A narrow break showed in this solid wall, through which the water boiled up, over and down the other side. A turn of my paddle, a husky stroke from Richard, and the canoe was straight, headed for the hole. The craft scraped, shuddered; there was a tearing sound. What a hollow, sickening feeling, to know that only a fraction of an inch separates the canoe, outfit and occupants from the river! The canoe plunged onward and shot over. We experienced sensations similar to those felt when a roller coaster, at the top, starts its sickening drop. Behind us stretched the wing dam, fading rapidly into a thin line, then a memory. Richard turned, grinned, and remarked, "Gee, we almost lost our breakfast, didn't we?"

We breakfasted at the Cassville hotel, celebrating with a banquet. Our canoe was anchored at the landing of the ferry *Dewey* which plies between here and Buena Vista, Iowa. Buena Vista, named for a battle of the Mexican War, means "Beautiful View." Cassville, last town in Wisconsin actually on the river, was named for General Lewis Cass, and had its beginnings in 1827, when a lead smelting furnace was established. The first territorial legislature of Wisconsin met here, and Cassville was a contestant for the state capital.

We left Cassville before eight o'clock July 10; already the day was blistering hot. The upper Mississippi Valley was in the grip of one of the worst heat waves in years. Shortly after noon we passed under the bridge at Eagle Point, at the upper end of Dubuque. Less than a mile above the Dubuque toll bridge, we passed the U. S. *Ellen* with a coal tow, and left Wisconsin behind us, meeting Illinois, fourth state of the journey. For two hundred and thirty-six miles Wisconsin had bordered the stream of America, contributing in that distance the St. Croix, Chippewa and Wisconsin rivers. For six hundred and ten miles Illinois was to be on our left, a greater distance than from Boston to Old Point Comfort, Virginia.

In the region centering about Potosi and Galena, a few miles below Dubuque, in Wisconsin and Illinois, the first lead mines of the Mississippi Valley were located. Discovered in 1829, for years it was believed the Wisconsin mines would produce silver as well as lead and zinc, a hope that has proven futile.

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

Scenes in the lead mining country to which speculators and prospectors rushed after 1832, resembled those enacted on a larger scale in silver and gold camps of California, the Rockies, Black Hills and Alaska. Highways were made of old Indian trails, on which ran lumber wagon expresses and Concord coaches. Many came by packet boats, others on horseback or with teams. Some walked from the east; some came from abroad. Mineral mad miners picked holes all over this section. For two decades the lead industry boomed. In 1839 and 1840 a phenomenally low stage of water prevailed in the Mississippi, which created a stagnant condition in the lead trade, resulting in demands for improvement of the river, and for better routes to link this section with the east. Until now most observers supposed, or took for granted, that the Father of Waters must forever continue to be the main artery of western trade. After 1847 the output dropped steadily. By 1857 New Orleans had practically lost the trade. At St. Louis shipments were less than half those of a decade before. The reasons: the California gold rush began in 1849; these mines and the Lake Superior copper deposits attracted miners; silver and lead were discovered in the Black Hills and Rocky Mountains; transportation difficulties increased; the shallow diggings had been thoroughly worked.

Dubuque, settled in 1833 and chartered as a city in 1840, is the oldest in Iowa. Years before, it was the trading site and mining camp of Julien Dubuque and his French Canadians, who located here in 1788. It lays back half a mile from the Mississippi, rising picturesquely up and over the bluffs. Some cities, though very old, have new buildings, but Dubuque's entire business section seems aged. The architecture of even the largest buildings is that of two generations ago. But on top of the hill, new houses, schools, and churches show that the oldest city in the state has not lost its vitality. The view across the river bottoms, from the heights, is worth the climb. Dubuque has been called the "Old Heidelberg of America." Educational institutions do top its hills, but we saw no singing students carrying steins and warbling merry drinking strains.

Charts of the Weather Bureau of the United States Department of Agriculture showed the highest temperatures each day

---


## *SOME WEATHER REPORTS*

---

between St. Paul and Davenport as follows: July 4, 80; July 5, 86; July 6, 87; July 7, 83; July 8, 83; July 9, 82; July 10, 84; July 11, 94; July 12, 95; and July 13, 90 degrees. This with a mean relative humidity of sixty per cent, really meaner than "relative humidity," made the river a stream of blazing fire many hours each day; every night we were several shades darker. In the pool of the Young Men's Christian Association at Dubuque, we found surcease from sunburn, and that night we "got to bed real early so we could get up and get a good early start," so that it would "really seem as though we were getting somewhere."

## CHAPTER XIV

### *Our one unpleasant reception on the trip; Clinton, Moline, Rock Island and Davenport, and "Goodbye" to Richard Pattee.*

ONG before six o'clock we were on the river; already it was hot. "Wonderful corn weather." Everywhere we stopped in Iowa we heard that expression. Everyone we met was tired; the night had been too hot to sleep. About eleven we came to Bellevue, Iowa, where we received the only unpleasant treatment accorded us on the trip. We went to a restaurant and sat at a table. Perhaps our khaki trousers, rakish sailor hats, tanned faces and arms did make us look like tramps, but we had donned clean shirts. Dozens in town in overalls looked far worse than we did; we, at least, were clean.

The owner said the regular dinner would not be ready until twelve. We asked for something else. He told us we would have to sit at the counter for everything but the regular dinner. We refused. After sitting erect for hours, we were going to have backs to chairs when we dined, so we could rest. When the proprietor made insulting remarks about tramps, we left the restaurant by the railroad tracks and went to the hotel by the park. There the natural Iowa friendliness manifested itself and we got just what we wanted to eat—sitting at tables. Bellevue was named for John D. Bell, who platted the site in 1835. Chief Keokuk's village once was located near here. At three o'clock we returned to the water; the fiercest glare of the mid-July sun was past. Mercutio said, "No, 'tis not so deep as a well, nor so wide as a church door; but 'tis enough, 'twill serve." So with us, though not quite so strong as at noon, the sun was hot enough.

Often canoe mates go well for a time, then peter out. On such an afternoon as the one below Bellevue, Richard proved most valuable. Not only was he a member of the two-paddle

---

## GOOD IOWA CORN WEATHER

---

team, unfailing, in the blinding, exhausting heat, but he possessed a quality I have found in no other campmate, a love for telling stories. While we were together I read an average of a book a day, without opening the covers. For hours at a time he would tell tales, giving the plot and a careful, detailed portrayal of characters, scenes, climax and conclusion. Hours on the water, in spite of the best possible scenery, especially after noon when the body begins to tire, where there is no excitement, and when the heat makes the head heavy with its intense beating, in spite of efforts to forget the sun, often seem longer than they really are. This blistering day Richard told a narrative so enthralling that I forgot sun, heat, paddling, and on we went past islands, bluffs, around bends—five, ten, a dozen miles—and the tale ended.

Ahead of us, bright, yellow, in the late afternoon sun, were the Illinois bluffs above Savanna. Savanna is a railroad town, setting back from the river. Below here the bluffs are farther apart, from four to five miles.

We pressed on to Sabula, Iowa, two miles downstream. Everything made fast at seven-thirty, we went up town with swarms of mosquitoes to look over the place, and saw it all in a glance. The only life was in the ice cream parlor. The heat was not so bad as during the daytime, but more resented because coolness was expected after sundown. The men in the store, after numerous veiled questions, intended to reveal whether we were working on a section gang or farm, so tanned were we, gave up and resumed discussions of the heat. Several dishes of ice cream consumed, we went out to look over the town. In fifteen minutes, a thorough job done, we returned for another sundae before retiring at nine-thirty—on Saturday night.

Sabula comes from the Latin "sabulum." First the place was called Carrollport, later Charleston. If anybody slept the night we spent in town, he was deaf and an Equatorian. What breeze there was died at bedtime. During the black night hours, all thoughts of sleep were driven away by the noisiest, most fruitless storm I have witnessed. The wind blew, hot and stifling, lightning flashed, thunder rolled, but not a drop of rain fell. A tired, wan Sunday morn came,

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

bringing the famous "Blue Monday" feeling. Each paper we read from day to day showed cooler weather south, but by the time we got there, cool weather had flown, and we followed down the valley one of the hottest waves it had known in years.

The river is marked, in addition to shore signs, with buoys, showing the channel. Sometimes in the heat of late morning or early afternoon, when we paddled half in a dream, a buoy would shoot at us. There would be a quick turn, a gurgle and chortle of the waters laughing at our surprise. Richard, leaning on his paddle, would turn and exclaim, "Good old buoy."

Four hours paddling over muggy miles brought us to Lyons and a few minutes later to Clinton, twenty miles below Sabula. Lyons is really part of Clinton, so close together are they. It was named by French missionaries who thought it resembled the site of Lyons in their homeland, and laid out by Elisha Buel in 1837. Across the river in Illinois is Fulton, onetime home of the Diamond Jo Line, famous steamboat company of the upper Mississippi. Clinton was named for De Witt Clinton, governor of New York and projector of the Erie Canal. It was laid out by J. M. Bartlett and called New York in 1855; later the same year, the Iowa Land Company resurveyed it and named it Clinton.

We forgot as we started for the Young Men's Christian Association that in small towns their buildings are closed on Sunday. But Clinton's "Y" had a dormitory. We had clean clothing to don after a bath. We were going to spend the afternoon here, dropping downriver far enough to find a quiet place for the night. Unable to get into the shower room of the athletic department, we went to the dormitory washroom. Here we took a shower, and, having forgotten towels, dried ourselves on paper.

Clinton is the youngest river town in Iowa. Here we saw more activity on the water than at any place since leaving St. Paul. There were many rowboats, launches, motorboats and a few canoes. This activity was not simply because it was Sunday. Clinton residents simply were more "river-minded" than those of other cities.

About an hour before sundown, with the calm of evening and lengthening shadows we returned to the stream, and

---

## AN EXCELLENT TOWN PUMP

---

paddled easily five miles to Camanche. We were greeted by an enthusiastic crowd. They could not see us plainly in the dark, and were too busy slapping mosquitoes to care much how we looked. But when they learned that we were not a certain evangelist and his assistant, whom they were expecting, most of them lost interest in us.

Dr. Peck, the founder, settled here in 1836, and foresaw a great metropolis. He platted thirty-two hundred lots, with streets one hundred feet wide, walked to Chicago and tried to sell the lots, with little success. Camanche has the best town pump on the river. It was easy to pump, squeaked less, and the water tasted better than any we had ever known. We drank so much that we felt water-logged, yet could not resist the temptation to drink more. Along the river above St. Louis we usually got good water, but occasionally found some that tasted of sulphur, shingles or iron.

In the cool of morning, after a last draught at the town pump, we pushed off at Camanche at five minutes past four. It was Richard's last day, with Davenport our destination. Stars still shone; the moon was yet awake. Cool winds played along the river. An air of expectancy hung over the earth. Even the mosquitoes seemed to be waiting for something, probably for wayfarers with more blood in their veins than was left in ours. Richard and myself had been together nearly three weeks, had become used to one another's paddling, could send the canoe speeding through the water. We changed from side to side without missing a stroke. Paddling had become second nature; conversation, observation and jollification were indulged in to the advantage, rather than disadvantage, of progress.

My Indian-hued canoe mate was to leave me not many bends downstream. Mile after mile we went, passing a startled bird and sending it chattering up into the air, or by pools from which the fish leaped in morning glee as they did their "daily dozen." Ten miles below Camanche we passed work boats of the United States Army Engineers, where one Waltonian waved "Cheerio" and held up a string of fish to indicate a "large morning." Next we passed Princeton, Iowa, and Cordova, Illinois, sites of old Indian villages, fast asleep, missing



---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

the glorious hour of the day. Shortly after seven, five miles farther, we reached Le Claire, at the head of the Rock Island Rapids, in early years the most dangerous stretch of water on the Mississippi.

Here in the old days lived the most expert pilots on the river. A hardy, hearty race, these rapids pilots, fit followers of Antoine Le Claire, founder of Davenport, for whom this town is named. At Le Claire we breakfasted and talked with the elderly proprietress about the days when pilots took the steamboats through. In spite of the danger of shooting these rapids, boat after boat went through, and millions of feet of logs were rafted as far south as St. Louis from the piney north woods. The first steamboat to navigate the rapids was the *Virginia*, in 1823.

Antoine Le Claire was a great man of his time, a man of honor and education. He came west to Fort Armstrong on Rock Island as interpreter. He could speak English, French, Spanish and a dozen Indian dialects.

We were on the water again at eight o'clock. Just below the village the river turns sharply to the right, and, running miles downstream are the famous rapids. Their danger, however, has been removed. A government canal three and six-tenths miles long has been constructed, permitting boats to pass out through a lock at the lower end to another lock five miles farther on, at Arsenal Island or Rock Island. The *Marquette*, towing two barges, emerged from the upper end of the canal just as we started down the outside. We preferred to run the rapids. With our light draft, we experienced no difficulty, but enjoyed the increased speed. The fastest current on the river is between Camanche and Davenport.

"Let's see what that monument is," suggested Richard, as we spied a white shaft. It was on Campbell's Island, where a battle in the War of 1812 was fought between United States troops and Indians under the leadership of Black Hawk. Captain John Campbell, commanding an expedition of one hundred, was in the third of three boats bound for Prairie du Chien to reenforce that outpost garrison. The boat was blown ashore. One thousand Indians under Black Hawk rushed out to attack the boat which the wind made impossible to free.

---

## LOCKING THROUGH A DAM

---

The troops in the other two boats, led by Captain Stephen Rector, returned to the aid of their fellow soldiers, and rescued most of the party. Thirty-six whites were killed and wounded.

Three miles below Campbell's Island is Moline, Illinois. We went past it down a short canal which led us to the lock and dam on Rock Island. This short canal makes Moline a river town. Otherwise it would be cut off by the Rock Island Rapids, which beat by here furiously. Moline was settled in January, 1829. In June, 1843, a town was platted by a mill company, and named for the French word *Moulin* or "Mill." The municipality was incorporated as a town in 1848 and as a city in 1872.

A few minutes below Moline we reached the Rock Island lock and dam, where we informed the lock tender that we had a big vessel we wished locked through. Government charts designate this island as Arsenal Island. The United States acquired title to the island by treaty with the Sacs and Foxes in November, 1804, but the reservation for military purposes derives its validity from the act of June 14, 1809. Work on a barracks began May 10, 1816, called Fort Armstrong in honor of the then secretary of war. It was garrisoned as a frontier post until 1836.

The modern arsenal dates from July 11, 1862. For years a force of five hundred supplied enough ammunition and ordnance for a peace-time army. But when the Spanish-American War broke out, war-basis production began. Another epoch in the arsenal's history began in 1916, when it became the "Essen" of the United States. From the day we entered the World War until the armistice was signed, nearly ninety million dollars were spent here. In 1918, 15,000 men and women were at work in the various plants.

On this island are the remains of the first bridge that ever spanned the Mississippi. Here also is the home of Colonel George Davenport, for whom the city is named. Colonel Davenport came to Rock Island with the first troops sent to build and garrison Fort Armstrong. On July 4, 1845, he was murdered here by robbers, and, except for a short period during the Civil War, when Union officers occupied it, the house has stood untenanted.

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

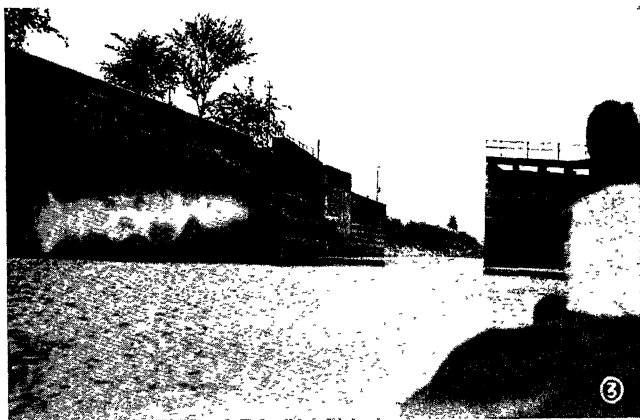
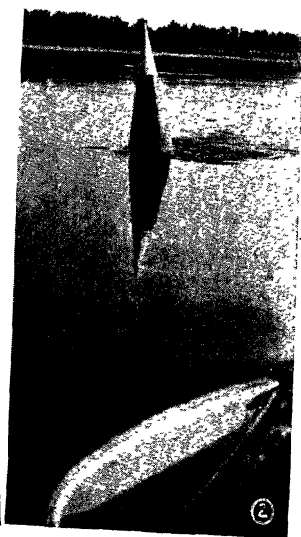
---

We were treated with courtesy by the tenders at the Rock Island Lock. Our little red canoe had a special party all its own, and in spite of remarks about the difficulty of locking through a *Leviathan* and "ocean freighter," they managed it quickly. Shortly before noon we emerged from the lock and paddled across the river to Davenport, the last mile of Richard's journey. Guided by huge signs of "Gold Rim" and "Western Queen," we pulled up our canoe on the levee before the Western Flour Mills, where we stored the outfit in care of Stanley A. Salter, general manager, father of a university classmate. As we stowed the duffle in the mill, we looked glum and sorrowful.

Richard's canoe trip was over. From Aitkin he had paddled five hundred and eighty-five miles in seventeen days, averaging thirty-four and one-half miles a day. I would miss my partner more than I cared to admit. That he preferred the middle half of the bed, that he considered the only comfortable way to sleep was with his feet in my stomach, and did not appreciate my singing, was of little importance. We had paddled against the same winds, been rained on by the same storms, baked under the same sun, slept on the same hard ground, eaten the same cooking, and risen at the same hour. Into his eyes had come a far away look, from peering into the distance beyond the next turn. I would have backed him against any boy his age in a canoe race, wrestling match, test of common sense or narrating a thrilling tale.

During my senior year at the university, while managing editor of our daily paper, "Chet" Salter was assistant, succeeding me the next year. Our friendship had so developed during those college years that he not only took us into his home where we were cleaned, shaved, bathed and dined, but during the three days in Davenport, he opened his wardrobe to me. We could carry no good clothes in the canoe.

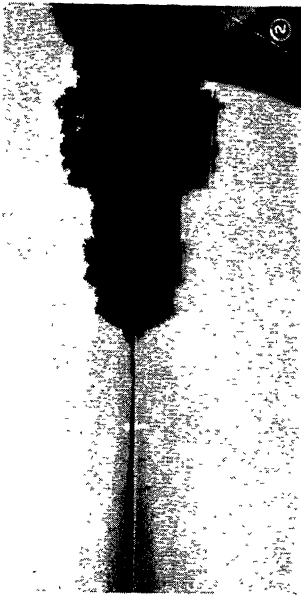
Some historians believe Davenport is the site of the old Indian town, Peouarea, of the Illini, visited by Joliet and Marquette. Though Peouarea may not have been the predecessor of the modern city, the earliest white explorers did find an Indian village here, and were told that as far back as Indian history went, it had been the site of tribal homes. A village



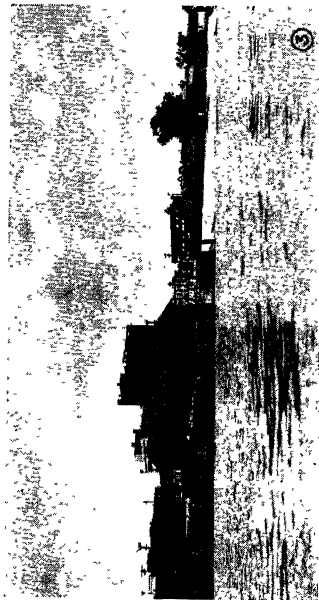
(1) Richard Pattee in a "characteristic pose", at Davenport, taken just after he had completed his share of the trip, nearly 600 miles.

(2) A channel marker, telling the ships on which side to pass.

(3) The Charles H. Curley of St. Paul leaving the Rock Island Dam. The black marks on the wall indicate how much water has been let out to lower the craft to the level of the river below the Rock Island Rapids.



(1) Building a wing dam a few miles above Savanna, Illinois. The willows shown on the left barge are sunk to the bottom and held with rocks, until a dam is built.



(3) Muscatine, with its up-to-date levee and a new seawall, ready for the development of water transportation.



(2) A sunrise picture taken the last day Richard Pattee was on the trip, soon after we left Camanche, Iowa.

(4) The largest excursion steamer on the Mississippi River, the St. Paul of St. Louis, which nearly upset the Charles H. Curley of St. Paul just above Alton, Illinois.

---

## LINCOLN AND BRIDGES

---

known as Oskosh once stood here, as did a later village called Morgan, named in honor of a half-breed Fox war chief.

Antoine Le Claire was the "great man" of the new village. In 1833 he became the first postmaster. He ran a ferry between Davenport and the little settlement where Rock Island stands today. Davenport was platted in 1836 and incorporated as a city in 1839. The first railroad engine west of the Mississippi was ferried across the river at Davenport, July 19, 1855. Named the *Antoine Le Claire*, it was known affectionately as "Tony."

The first bridge across the Mississippi was built at Davenport, by the federal government and what is now the Rock Island Railroad, a wooden structure, completed in 1856. The piers were placed so as to create an aggravated swirl, which was accentuated by the very strong currents here. May 16, 1858, the *Effie Afton* was thrown against one of the piers; it sank with loss of life. The steamboat interests jumped at the hoped-for opportunity, bringing suit to have the bridge condemned and removed. Lawyer Abraham Lincoln was one of the attorneys who defended the railroad interests. The bridge was ordered removed, but an appeal to the Supreme Court secured a reversal and it stayed until the new one was completed in 1872. The third bridge now spans the river.

A battle of the War of 1812 was fought September 6, 1814, on an island in the river within the present city limits of Davenport, known variously as Offermann's Island, Suburban Island, Grand Island, and to history as Credit Island, between Brevet Major Zachary Taylor's detachment and thirty British soldiers under Lieutenant Duncan Graham, reenforced by one thousand Indians. Major Taylor had been sent from St. Louis to punish the Indians for their attack upon the expedition at Campbell's Island. The troops had left St. Louis in eight keelboats, so large that they had portholes for cannon; good transports, but unwieldy. Fast Indian runners kept the British at Prairie du Chien posted on American movements. Thirty men with a brass three-pounder and two swivel guns reached the mouth of Rock River, four miles below Rock Island, in time to arouse the Foxes and Sauks with the aid of several kegs of rum, a few hatchets, beads and trinkets. When the Americans reached

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

the mouth of Rock River late in the day, a terrific windstorm struck the boats, blowing them onto the Iowa shore. Soon after daybreak next morning the battle of Credit Island was fought. A gallant stand was made, but odds were so heavy against them that Major Taylor pulled anchor and retired to St. Louis.

Across the Mississippi from Davenport above the mouth of Rock River, is the city of Rock Island, once called Farnamsburg, and later Stephenson. It was incorporated as Rock Island in 1837, and invested with a city charter in 1849. On this site in the days of *des sauvages*, stood the most famous of Indian villages, Black Hawk's town of Saukenuk or Saukie-aukie. From here to Detroit, touching at Chicago, ran the most traveled Indian trail in America. From Black Hawk's Watch Tower, a promontory at the old city, the Mississippi is seen rolling its flood toward the sea.

Though the Sauks were considered fairly peaceful, contented Indians, Saukenuk was the scene of much bloodshed. During the Revolutionary War there was a fight here, because of Sauk and Fox loyalty to the British. These tribes participated in the British expedition against Cahokia and Pencour in 1780. In retaliation, George Rogers Clark sent a detachment to destroy Saukie-aukie. Seven hundred braves defended the city, but the Americans left the town in ashes.

Rock River brings the Hennepin Canal to the Father of Waters, linking it with the Great Lakes. The canal is seventy-five miles long and has thirty-two locks, but it is navigable only for boats of shallow draft. The other end is on the Illinois River near Bureau Junction.

Black Hawk's Watch Tower for generations before him was used as a lookout. Black Hawk was not an hereditary chief, but a demagogic leader of his tribe, who came into power soon after 1800. In some respects he was wrong in his actions toward the whites, but, as has ever been the case of the Indian, he was the victim of white man's force, deceit and brains. He had "touched the quill" at the treaties of 1804 and 1816, between the United States and the Foxes and Sauks, but later denied the authority of tribal chiefs to sign away common lands. Keokuk, head chief of the Foxes, crossed the Mississippi after

---

## WORDS OF AN INDIAN CHIEF

---

the treaty of 1816, but "Black Hawk's British Band," two hundred Sauks who had fought under Tecumseh, remained on their old site.

As early as 1823 white squatters began to settle on the land near Saukenuk, where the tribal cemetery was located. They destroyed the Indians' crops, annoyed the braves, despoiled and abused their women and even beat some of the warriors. In the spring of 1830 affairs almost reached the breaking point. Returning from the winter hunt, they found their cemetery plowed over, forty squatters on their farming lands, and their village site occupied, contrary to the terms of treaty. Black Hawk made threats and gestures, but June 25, 1831, he cowered before seven hundred militiamen and regulars under General Gaines, and crossed to the west side of the Mississippi, promising never to return without permission.

Black Hawk was then fifty-four years old, an able organizer and military tactician, but too easily led. Accepting offers of inter-tribal assistance, he crossed the Mississippi at Yellow Banks, now Oquawka, April 6, 1832, with five hundred warriors, women and children. The news spread like wildfire; the entire countryside was aroused. From everywhere came militia to suppress the uprising of Black Hawk, who had recrossed the river to find suitable lands on which to raise crops for the coming winter. The band was chased across Illinois and southern Wisconsin until dispersed near the mouth of the Bad Axe River. Black Hawk fled to the Winnebagoes in the Dells of the Wisconsin River, who betrayed him, and on August 27, 1832, surrendered him at Prairie du Chien, ending the last Indian uprising east of the Mississippi.


Black Hawk wrote and spoke considerably after his capture, and published an autobiography. As we stood on the bluff overlooking the valleys of the Rock and Mississippi rivers, watching their majestic flow, I thought of a paragraph in an address he had made:

"Rock River was a beautiful country. I liked my town, my cornfields, and the home of my people. I fought for them."



## CHAPTER XV

### *Allen Sulerud takes up the paddle; Muscatine, New Boston and Oquawka; Dallas City; the Mormons at Nauvoo.*

ERY white and very thin, but ready for anything the hundreds of miles ahead might bring, Allen Sulerud climbed into *The Charles H. Curley* of St. Paul at Davenport at dawn July 17. Allen was a normally strong and healthy person, but certainly a "paleface." I had been on the river a month, and had reached the point where persons might have suspected me of being a "man of color," had they seen only the exposed parts. We departed the city, paddling easily in the morning cool, Allen under orders to stop and rest whenever tired. I did not want him to start with a ruthless enthusiasm that soon might result in tedium, boredom and dissatisfaction.

For the first few days Allen was soft. He paddled half-heartedly and with a maximum of effort. But before we reached St. Louis, he had developed into a veritable water rat, a paddling maniac. After becoming acclimated, he wielded lusty strokes avidly, as we followed joyously the archaic windings of the Mississippi.

Two hours brought us to Buffalo, Iowa, so named because several generations ago Buffalo were common here. Allen by this time was ready to eat the thwart of the canoe. We had covered eight miles and already Allen was impressed by early morning, the river, the joy of the whole thing. Paddling past Davenport's water front and by the mouth of Rock River, we skirted Andalusia Island, the mist hanging heavy. A faint, greyish lead held the heavens. A silver sheen replaced it. Colors crept along from the east filling the morning with life and light. Opalescent sprays filtered across the skies, and were extinguished when a burnished shield, lustrous, smooth, took the stage. The mists disappeared. The sun's rays sent over our skins pleasurable sensations; until now, in spite of our

---

## ALLEN'S FIRST MORNING

---

exertions, we had been dew-cooled. The oily black of the river became a shining ribbon, threadings its way past islands and sandbars to greater glory and the sea.

After Allen had disposed of several boxes of breakfast food, a loaf or two of bread, one or more quarts of milk and some fruit at Buffalo, he was refueled and rested. "Bring on your canoe and this well known Father of Waters," he demanded. By night the lion had been well tamed.

Allen's first river morning was a revelation to him. Though not so fine from Davenport south as between there and St. Paul, this river of the world was enchanting. Never before had he canoed on the Mississippi; only now did he appreciate the supremacy of this mode of travel over all gasoline or steam-aided locomotion. We paddled sometimes close to the bluffs which hung close to the river. Again we guided the craft to midstream from where we watched the ever changing contour and colors of the cliffs and foliage.

Past green-clad bits of land we went, around bends, past little homes squatting unobtrusively near the water's edge, coming at eleven-thirty to the "Town of the Mascoutins," Muscatine. Mascoutin means "People of the Little Prairie," and the name comes from the tribe of Indians that once lived on the island just below the present city. George Davenport and Russell Farnam, representatives of the American Fur Company, made the first settlement here in 1833, built a two-room structure near shore, and exchanged goods, beads, and food for peltries.

The town first was known as Newburg, but when Farnam and Davenport sold their interest in 1836, John Vanater purchased the post and laid out a town called Bloomington, for the city in Indiana, as it was known until 1849, when Muscatine was adopted. With the advent of the steamboat, Muscatine grew. Located at the apex of the great bend the Mississippi makes in Iowa, it was the best shipping center for interior settlements. Supplies came here by boat, and were taken by wagon to Iowa City, Cedar Falls, Fort Dodge and other inland towns which sent produce and crops to Muscatine for shipment. For a time Muscatine was capital of Iowa, losing the honor to Burlington. Today it is famous as the

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

largest single producing center of fresh water pearl buttons in the world.

Below the city we came to the Muscatine Bottoms. A generation ago these bottomlands, extending many miles downstream and half a dozen miles between the bluffs in the shape of a huge crescent, were swampy, practically valueless. Now this area is drained, ditched, and devoted to agriculture. Pumps during wet seasons maintain the proper degree of moisture on the land. We pulled up for two hours to avoid the intense heat of midday. My nose was peeling for the fifth time. I knew the pain of sunburn and wanted Allen to avoid it if possible.

All afternoon we were within sight of islands. The Illinois bluffs ranged from four to eight miles east of the river; in Iowa they were from one to two miles away. We came to New Boston, Illinois, at six o'clock, just after passing the *Elk* and barge, and the U.S.S. *Minneapolis* with two barges. Allen was nearly all in. We had made fifty-one miles for the day, and he had labored with no conditioning whatever. If an athlete competes in football, hockey or basketball without training, he is in danger of receiving severe injuries from body contacts, which, if he were hardened, would cause not even a bruise; and also likely to strain his heart or lungs. But with canoeing, we found the best way to get into condition was to work into it. Bill and I could not help ourselves. Richard was young and eager. Allen was too stubborn to give up when he was tired. Aching backs, shoulders and hands, tired necks, weary legs, we all experienced these. Allen would admit nothing until everything was ready for the night. Then he confessed he wanted a copious quantity of food and a bed.

New Boston lays opposite the Iowa River mouth, a farming and pearl fishing community, setting back from the river on a hill. It is famous as the site of Allen's first night on the journey, where, long before nine o'clock, he was making the hills reecho with numerous manifestations of his joy over sleep.

Before the sun peeked over the hills at five o'clock, to inquire if all were well with the world, we were off. We passed Keithsburg in the roseate sunrise moments when the waters talk only to those who love them, when faint breezes loll half

---

## WE MEET CLAM DIGGERS

---

awake among the trees and quietly ripple the waters. Two hours below New Boston we passed the sand sucker *Mayor*. An hour later we reached Oquawka, Illinois, a dozen miles done before breakfast. Oquawka is another little farming and clam fishing town. It was called "Yellow Banks" before the Civil War, from Oquawkiek, the name given to a high, yellow bluff, extending some miles upriver above town.

From D. M. Smith, expert Oquawka clam fisherman, we learned much about clam digging. He showed us various kinds of shells, and explained why certain shells were more valuable than others. Clamming is a great industry on the Mississippi River. Between St. Paul and St. Louis clam diggers work the Father of Waters, gathering thousands of tons of shells each season. Below St. Louis, along the Ohio and tributaries, the same work is called mussel digging. At Hastings we noticed the first clam digging outfit; at every village as far as the Missouri we saw one or more of these sets.

The clam fishers usually get out in early morning and late afternoon, spending several hours slowly working a small portion of the river. They drop their rakes, which are attached to a rake-bar about the length of the boat. On the end of the bars are hooks, which drag the river bed. The clam, like a baby, grabs at whatever it touches. It lies half-embedded in the bottom, partly open, the hinder end upstream against the current. When the hook touches it, the mussel clamps to it and is sometimes dragged many yards before it is hauled into the boat. Different kinds bring different prices, because of size, shape and quality. The shells are made into buttons, and probably everyone in the United States has had mother sew on a button made from a clam caught in the Mississippi.

Several of the clam diggers were baking the meats out of the clams. They cooked them in tubsful; then they took the meats out after opening them, and sacked the shells for shipment. Thousands of dollars in pearls are found annually in Mississippi River clams, and sold in the eastern markets. These pearls and slugs, less perfect than pearls, the fishermen seek eagerly. After the meat and brine have been extracted from the mussel, this is sifted carefully through fine screen sieves,

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

so that no pearls may be lost. Buyers from Paris, London and New York come to the Mississippi River to purchase pearls.

Even the most innocent remark may be misconstrued. While we were watching the men at work, talking about the life, I said:

"I bet it would be fun to be a clamman."

"Wouldn't be much fun for you in some places," one fisherman remarked with a show of hostility.

"Why not?" I asked, taken back.

"Well, you know, there's some places where the Ku Kluxers aren't so very popular."

After I told him that I said "Clamman," and not "Klansman," he explained that I ought to refer to them as clam diggers, or clam fishers, so there could be no possible misunderstanding.

At noon we reached Burlington, a smoky city sitting on a hillside, overlooking the Illinois bottomlands. All morning we had been at a loss to understand the lack of current. Burlington was a fur trading post in 1829 or earlier. The first permanent settlement, called "Flint Hill," was made in 1832. Sampson S. White platted the present town in 1834.

The three days I spent in Davenport were fairly cool, but the thermometer again began to soar. Today it was ninety degrees. At mid-afternoon we returned to the river. Our charts showed Burlington Island just below the city. However, in spite of the fact that the river was not rising, and there had been no heavy rains, most of the island was under water. We were mystified. The river had no current. Dead trees stood gauntly out of the water, made more ghastly in the yellow light streaming over the Iowa hills through gathering clouds. We then realized that the Keokuk Dam was responsible. For nearly sixty miles the dam has a decided effect, while from Burlington to Keokuk, nearly forty miles, there is almost no current.

About six the clouds completely hid the remaining light of day and opened wide their floodgates. We had time to cover the outfit, but not ourselves. Dallas City, where we had decided to spend the night, was still four miles away. We followed several channel lights into the teeth of a driving wind which

---

## THE FIRST RIVER PACKET

---

whipped the waves and sent the rain stinging against bare bodies.

The Dallas City hotel was not the best in the state, but it was dry, warm, and there we got thawed out and changed clothes. It was Saturday night. The usual crowd of townspeople and farmers were in the best restaurant by the time we entered. The heat and rain had conspired to lower the usually happy, gay spirits of the rural crowd. But we were in good humor, regardless of the blistering hours and drenching. We had made forty-four miles, in spite of long stops, head winds, and poor current.

Sunday plans called for a ten-mile paddle in the cool of morning to Fort Madison to breakfast, an eight-mile paddle to Nauvoo, and, in the cool of late afternoon, another short paddle to Keokuk. The meanest wind we had yet encountered failed to upset our schedule, but it did necessitate hard work. Shortly before five o'clock with clouds sulkily strewn about the sky, we left Dallas City. Before six the wind, in spite of the counsel to labor only six days, awakened, peeked out of one eye, saw us making good progress and went to work. We reached Fort Madison as the town clock struck seven.

In 1805, when Pike sought the Mississippi sources, he had orders to select a fort site above St. Louis. He recommended that a fort be built at Shokokon or Flint Hills, as Burlington was known, but Fort Madison was chosen. The city stands on the original site of the fort. It was settled in 1832.

Here we saw the first packet steamboat met on the river, the *Bald Eagle*, run by the Eagle Packet Company between St. Louis and Fort Madison. We also saw the *Decatur of Omaha*, towing four barges of the River Transit Company, the *Ramsey*, *Hennepin*, *Dakota* and *Winona*. We heard for the first time negro stevedores, singing as they worked. The Eagle Packet Company is one of the two packet lines running out of St. Louis above that city. The *Golden Eagle* in the St. Louis and Peoria trade; the *Cape Girardeau*, plying between St. Louis and Commerce; the *Bald Eagle*; and the *Piasa* and *Colorado* for special trips, carry on a trade begun about 1861.

It took three hours to paddle from Fort Madison to Nauvoo. The wind had increased and was blowing huge waves that

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

rolled and broke like combers of the sea. The waves did not worry us so much as the possibility of impaling our canoe on the top of a tree submerged when the Keokuk Dam backed up the waters. Never until this morning did I appreciate Walt Whitman's phrase "pent-up, aching rivers."

We beached our canoe at Nauvoo, and two fishermen who had just found their "sermons in running brooks," and who knew of our trip, took us for a ride, and showed us everything of historic interest in the city.

No more interesting group of settlers ever came to Illinois than the Mormons who settled in Nauvoo under the leadership of Joseph Smith, "The American Mahomet." He started the church, preaching from the Bible, and, like the man with whom he had been compared, adding to it. The Church of Christ of Latter-Day Saints was organized at Fayette, New York, April 6, 1830. The church controlled the consciences, spiritual affairs, persons and properties of its followers.

The Saints moved from New York to Ohio, where they dedicated their first temple at Kirtland, then to Caldwell county, Missouri. Declaring they were God's Saints and that He had given that country to them, they refused to acknowledge the authority of the State of Missouri. Many, including "The Prophet," became involved in legal difficulties. Ordered to leave the state, they sought refuge in 1839 in Illinois, settling at Commerce, which they renamed Nauvoo, meaning "pleasant." Within two years they had built a city of two thousand buildings and sixteen thousand population. They planned to erect here on the banks of the Mississippi a great city that should be the gathering place of Zion. Among so many so quickly drawn, there inevitably were fools, scoundrels, and *poseurs*, but most of them were sincere, though fanatical, followers of Mormonism.

Possibly all would have been well had they confined themselves to spiritual control, or to temporal powers within Nauvoo or Hancock county. But the teachings of the sect, their fanatical belief in personal relationship to God, must inevitably have led them into conflict with outside authority. The Mormons asked of the Illinois legislature a charter for the town of Nauvoo. Both parties rushed its passage, giving such

---

## EXPULSION OF THE MORMONS

---

powers as have never been granted to any other municipality in America. It created a government within a government; a city council empowered to pass ordinances contrary to state laws. In addition to being "The Prophet" and spiritual leader of the church, Smith was president, editor, general of the Nauvoo Legion, legislator in council, judge in one court and chief justice in another, real estate agent, tavern keeper, merchant and mayor.

Not satisfied with this, and encouraged by their success in handling the Illinois legislature, they petitioned Congress to establish a separate government for them in Nauvoo. Joseph Smith announced himself a candidate for the presidency of the United States. The people of Illinois were becoming embittered against the Mormons, declaring they voted in a body, making election impossible without their votes; were planning to set up a government of their own, making counterfeit money, getting the choice farms of the countryside, making religion a cloak for crime, sheltering outlaws and criminals, practicing polygamy and immorality under the name of spiritual wives. Even then everything might have been smoothed had not Smith and his assistants abused the privilege of freedom of the press. A man named Law started a newspaper to denounce the despotic prophet and fight polygamy; one issue was printed. Smith's supporters destroyed the press and expelled Law and his friends from the church.

When troops were called to serve as a constable's posse, Smith assembled the Nauvoo Legion and declared martial law. Governor Thomas Ford went to Carthage. At his request, with promises of a fair trial and protection, Smith and his brother Hyrum went to Carthage, where they were arrested and jailed on charges of treason and riot. The night of June 23, 1844, a mob broke into the Carthage jail and killed both Joseph and Hyrum Smith.

His murder made Joseph Smith a martyr and gave incentive to his teachings, uniting his followers into a determined band ready to face any amount of persecution. At the time of the death of "The Prophet," the Mormon church numbered 200,000, about the number Christianity had when it was the same age. Convinced they could no longer remain safely in the



---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

state, the elders agreed to leave in the spring of 1846, providing they would be left in peace until then. In May nearly sixteen thousand set out in their search for the promised land, and the next July reached Great Salt Lake, where they have made gardens grow and flowers bloom on the desert, and won prosperity and peace.

Another communal organization followed closely on the heels of the Mormons at Nauvoo, Icarians led by Pere Cabot, French, Germans and Americans. They were liberal in religion; many were free-thinkers. The colony lasted several years and disbanded, chiefly because of economic factors. There never were more than twelve hundred Icarians here at one time, and a total of eighteen hundred.

Thus we spent another day, with the shades and spirits of years gone by, absorbing the atmosphere of another city of dreams, on our quest to learn "Where Goes the River."

## CHAPTER XVI

*We are locked through the Keokuk Dam; Missouri the fifth state on the river; Quincy, Mark Twain Land and Hannibal.*



AS WE were preparing to leave Nauvoo, we spied the steamer *Capitol* coming up the broad expanse of water, flags flying, sounds of music on the air. Five minutes later waves dashing against the shore brought us sprinting to our canoe. It had been turned broadside and was almost full of water. We emptied it and repacked. This incident taught us that waves from a big steamer create greater havoc alongshore than within a few yards of the boat. This knowledge saved us many upsets on the lower river.

Across from us lay Montrose, Iowa, small and somnolent. The Indians called it "Ah-we-pe-tuk" or "The beginning of the rapids," for the white water later known as the Des Moines Rapids began opposite here. Local history says that the first interview on the Mississippi was held near here, June 25, 1673, between Joliet and the Indians.

Between Nauvoo and Keokuk Dam stretched ten miles, a joyful paddle, a distance we frequently made in two hours. The wind had been blowing strenuously all day, evidently only practicing to be ready for us when we reembarked. As we took to the water the wind began to freshen. We rode the waves with a gladness in our hearts and arms. We were not those half-man and half-horse centaurs, but we were half-man and half-canoe; the paddles were part of us, our movements so synchronized that we moved as one. The waves were larger than any thus far; not the short, choppy, hacking waves of Lake Winnibigoshish, but steady long rolls. We experienced more difficulty in preventing the fitful, inexorable wind from twisting the paddles in our hands than in riding the combers.

Lake Cooper is named for Hugh L. Cooper, the hydraulic engineer who designed and built the Keokuk Dam. When the dam was completed, residents of the vicinity called the backed

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

up waters Lake Cooper, a body thirty-five miles long, and from one to two miles wide, but the government officially christened it Lake Keokuk.

Never had we paddled so prodigiously. The entire distance, which took us three and one-half hours, was against bitter headwinds. The Steamer *Capitol* passed us and we spurted, hoping to lock through with it, but lost by a few minutes. When we arrived, we tied the canoe and climbed onto the dam and watched the great boat sinking slowly into the mammoth lock, until only the smokestacks and pilot house showed above the level of the lock. It was now seven o'clock. I asked Allen how he would like to eat where we were.

"Not by a damsite," he replied, and, it being Sunday, and the last dam on the river, I forgave him.

We had set our minds on locking through the river's greatest dam, so as soon as the *Capitol* left the lock, we approached T. J. Harrington, dam tender, and asked when we could lock through.

"Tomorrow at ten," he replied.

"No chance until then?"

"Not a chance!"

"Gee, that'll hold us up nearly ten hours, and we wanted to reach St. Louis before Friday night."

"Too bad, sonny."

"Well, maybe you'll let us look through your buildings, inspect the machinery, and maybe you'll explain how it works, and also the water power and the commercial aspects of navigation."

T. J. Harrington was interested. Allen asked questions about the dam, lock, water power, while I struck responsive chords with queries about river commerce, prospects of reviving water transportation, lockages, and happened to open a bag of caramels. He accepted a few; the talk waxed more friendly and interesting.

"By the way," he suddenly interrupted himself, "what sort of a trip are you on?"

"Some persons call it a pleasure trip," I replied. "Others a kind of foolishness named for a certain river obstruction. We really are making a trip from the source of the Mississippi

---

## DROPPING INTO BLACKNESS

---

to the Gulf because no one living has done it by canoe, and I'm writing a series of articles for the New Orleans *Times-Picayune*."

A little more talk. Then, confidentially, "Tell you what I'll do for you boys. I read of your trip, but thought you'd been drowned long ago. I'll make a special lockage after dark, when this crowd has gone home."

Two schoolboys owning new boots with red stars at the top never were more happy than we were. There were only two lockages a day for pleasure craft, Mr. Harrington explained, but regular lockages were made for business or commercial boats. As we were representatives of the press, he would make a special lockage. But I believe we bribed him with those walnut caramels.

A canal was constructed by the government in 1877, enabling vessels to pass on the Iowa side, eight miles through the lower, middle and guard lock, to avoid the dangerous Des Moines Rapids. This is now flooded and the rapids are covered by thirty feet of water. The canal and locks were completed by the federal government in 1877 at a cost of \$4,750,000. In 1899 the citizens of Hamilton, Illinois, and Keokuk raised a fund and secured government aid. Money was raised in half a dozen countries to finance this project and the dam constructed by the Mississippi River Power Company, drowning out the Des Moines Rapids, which gathered a twenty-two foot head in twelve miles.

This great concrete dam on which we waited is 4,649 feet long, thirty-five feet high, with a forty-two foot base and a width of twenty-nine feet at the top, and furnishes a quarter million horse power. Government engineers report that the dam creates a pool of sixty-five miles of slack water. The lock is one hundred and ten feet long and as wide as those of the Panama Canal, surely big enough to accommodate our seventeen foot canoe.

Keokuk on the bend of the river was named for Chief Keokuk or Ke-o-kuk, "Running Fox" or "Watchful Fox," an hereditary chief of the Sacs and Foxes. Before the white man came, this spot was called "Puck-e-che-tuck" or "The foot of the rapids."

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

About eight o'clock, T. J. Harrington ordered the lock filled. It was dark, clouds and hills obscuring the faint afterglow of the sun. When the water in the lock was the same level as that of Lake Cooper, the upper gates were opened, and, in the black night, we paddled into the lock.

Orders were shouted. The gates swung slowly shut. We were encompassed, bound in, by four walls. Another order, more clanking of machinery, then came sounds of rushing water. It seemed we remained stationary: the walls rose around us. So gently did the hundreds of tons of waters leave the lock that the little canoe scarcely stirred. Up, up, still up, went the walls. We were dropping, ten feet, fifteen, twenty feet. How high the walls looked! How far up seemed the men looking down at us, almost as far as those little specks of light in the heavens. As the walls reached up they dripped little streams onto the surface, which sounded like waterfalls. Someone shouted. We shouted back. Our voices sounded reverberant, rolling around the walls as when inside of a cavern.

Down, down, we continued, and up stretched the walls, twenty-five, thirty, thirty-five feet. The sound of rushing waters lessened. Thirty-six feet. We were more than forty feet below the men standing on the lock: it seemed four hundred. The black, wet walls glistened weirdly in the pale glow of lights far above. We felt the insignificance of man, the tremendous force and power of water. Above us, resistless, ceaseless, were one thousand and fifteen Mississippi River miles. In our little red canoe, sitting in the dark, we were awed by the immensity of the river, the dam, the lock, the night. We were not frightened by the dark, but had anyone said "Boooh," we certainly would have jumped. Voices called out: again we shouted replies. The gates of the lower end of the lock swung open. Before us, a few hundred yards distant, was Keokuk, "The Gate City of Iowa." Good luck's and thank you's were shouted, and the Mississippi received us once more.

Because the river here forms a nose-like promontory, Keokuk was first called "The Point." It was first settled in 1820 by a Dr. Muir, former surgeon at Fort Edwards. Local historians say that Keokuk is really the oldest town in Iowa,

---

## FOUNDING OF KEOKUK

---

contending that the settlement of Dubuque by one family did not constitute founding a town.

We left Keokuk at five-thirty; the city lay aslumber in the misty dawn, cool, quiet. A few minutes paddling brought us to the Des Moines River mouth. For three hundred and twenty-four miles the "Hawkeye State" had been on our right: now it was supplanted by the fifth state, Missouri. The Indians called the river "Mikonang" or "Road." Across the river in Illinois is Warsaw. After the Battle of Credit Island, in September 1814, Major Zachary Taylor dropped downstream to where Warsaw now stands, built and garrisoned Fort Edwards, and returned to St. Louis. The war ended three months later.

In 1820, when the Indians were causing excitement, the federal government issued an order prohibiting them within the boundaries of Fort Edwards, refusing to except even Indian wives of soldiers and officers. Dr. Muir resigned his commission and with his Indian wife settled at "The Point."

After leagues of Lake Cooper, we were watching the river writing its autobiography in the miles of the mid-continent. An hour below Warsaw, the *Belle of Calhoun* passed us. At ten o'clock we reached Canton, our first stop in Missouri. As we walked up over a little hill, we remarked with enthusiasm, "Now we're getting south." Our memories of Canton are of ice water tasting of ammonia, the famous Missouri mule in numbers, and many little shacks filled with many more negroes. Canton, once called "Cottonwood Prairie," was settled in 1827, surveyed in 1830 and named for Canton, Ohio. Between last night in Keokuk and breakfast in Canton, we noticed the most pronounced change on the trip. Only twenty-two miles apart, yet the attitude of the two places was entirely different. Keokuk was busy, energetic, polite but somewhat impatient, restless, active. Canton was unhurried, complacent, satisfied. It would figuratively stop to powder its nose and greet a neighbor on Judgment Day. We ordered breakfast and had time to talk it over thoroughly, also the weather, Congress, and crops. But when food came, it was served with a smile, and later there was an inquiry as to whether it was satisfactory. In a small town restaurant in the north it is "take it and like it or leave it."

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

We discovered that the weather, in spite of wits and jesters, is a justly important topic of conversation. During the next few weeks I engaged in some of the most fascinating conversations of my life, most of them about the weather. It is a live, vital topic. We learned facts not only about the weather where we happened to stop, but about weather in Borneo, Madagascar, Isle of Pines, Panama and New Zealand. Wherever we happened to be, the weather always was "very unusual;" "ordinarily" it was the best in the world.

After some minutes more than our "Half Hour for Lunch," we were back on the river. Shortly before reaching Quincy, Illinois, seventeen miles below Canton, it began to rain, but we had good current, and were full of vim and vigor. At noon we pulled up at the Diamond Jo warehouse at Quincy. In 1811 a French trader, Bauvet, had a post here. In 1813 a Sauk village occupied this site. The first cabin was built in 1822, but the steamboat *Western Engineer* landed here in 1820. In 1823 there was only one crude cabin built by John Woods, later lieutenant-governor of Illinois. John Quincy Adams was elected president of the United States, so in his honor the county was named Adams and the city Quincy. The city was platted in 1825.

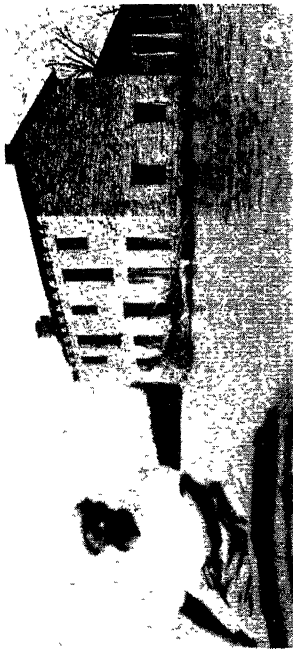
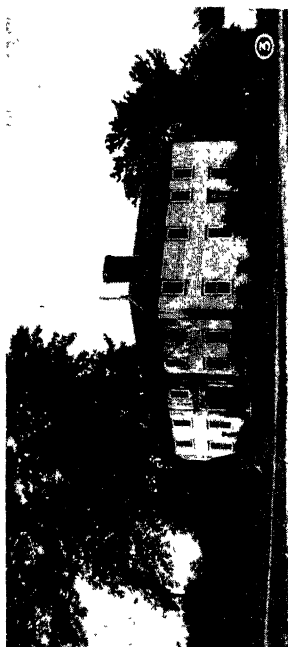
Quincy boomed with the coming of the steamboat, and it is still a steamboat town in spirit. Steamboats! From the top of Quincy's hills, what a view! First the sound of the steamboat whistle. Then the boat's appearance around a bend, waving majestically streamers of smoke behind it. A steamboat whistle still brings the children to the river's edge, or to the landing. Even yet we catch the swaggering spirit of this young country, its virility and vitality. We imagine we still hear the creak and strain of wagons hauling produce. We picture the coach dashing madly over prairie roads, hear voices and a whip crackling in the distance, and the coach bursting upon us. There is a bustle and rustle, noise and flare, then out onto the bosom of the nation's stream goes the packet, Quincy's link with "life." The steamboat day was a time when persons took life, as they did their whiskey, four fingers deep, without a chaser.

Landing at Quincy, we made the canoe fast in front of the old Diamond Jo warehouse, one relic of bygone days still



(1) Here at Oquawka, Illinois, the canoeists received a lesson in clam fishing from D. M. Smith, an expert clam digger. The dog "Bounce" is annoyed by the camera and also by the smoke from the fire, where the clam diggers are baking the meats out of the shells.

(2) The Joseph Smith mansion at Nauvoo, from where he went in June, 1844, to Carthage, Illinois, where the founder of the Mormon religion, "The Prophet" of which he was, met death at the hands of a mob.

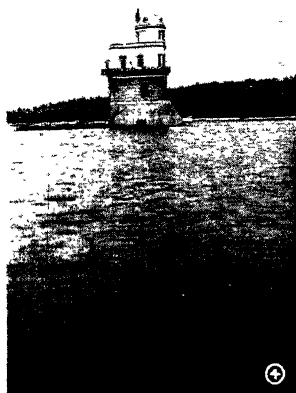
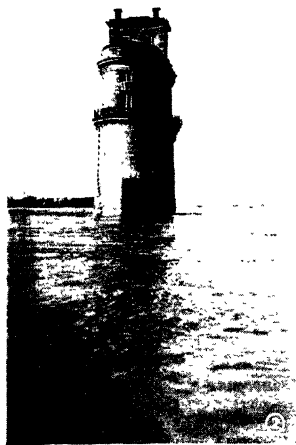


(3) The Captain White house, the oldest in Nauvoo, which once stood a safe distance back from the river. Since the installation of the Keokuk dam and the creation of Lake Cooper, the place has been abandoned and is fast going to ruin.

(4) Clarksville, Missouri, showing the waterfront of the little riverside village, a typical scene among Mississippi River towns for several hundred miles above the Missouri mouth.







(1) Driving hogs aboard the Golden Eagle at one of the little landings on its run over the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers between Peoria and St. Louis.

(2) This is the second of the two towers off the Chain of Rocks, St. Louis, past which the current rushes and swirls. It was while photographing these towers that the author nearly upset the craft.

(3) A shore sign, by which pilots guide the boats along the Mississippi. The light at night tells them where they are.

(4) This might well be a castle on some old-world river, where the cruel uncle imprisons the beautiful princess. It is one of the intake towers through which St. Louis receives its water supply.

---

## WE ESCAPE A STORM

---

standing along the levee. Allen gave two long hoots and three short ones, which brought an old watchman running to see who remembered the call of the Diamond Jo boats.

Less than two miles below Quincy, the worst electrical storm we had yet encountered forced us ashore. We saw it a mile away, sweeping upriver, purplish black, with heavy wind, lightning and thunder. Protections laid along the shore for some distance below Quincy to keep the hungry river from eating the banks, made a safe landing impossible, but there was no time to gain the Missouri side. We climbed out, unloaded the canoe, placed it over the duffle, weighted it with rocks, then scurried under a house which was built on stilts for flood protection. After an hour of furious, driving rain, lightning and crashing thunder, during which time we played an extra-inning game of baseball on a log with a jack knife, we again took to the river. I forget who won the ball game.

Navigation between St. Paul and New Orleans, in good stages of water, is now practically without danger, with bars, snags and other impedimenta marked, the channel lighted by night. Still a mystery, a spell, hangs over the steamboat, its officers and life. We did not have to watch for the large white shore signs, except where the river was very circuitous and where wing dams were under water.

Ordinarily not superstitious, all day I thought of an accident that befell my two Bemidji friends a few miles below Quincy. To save time, they were eating lunch as they drifted, the man in the bow facing the stern. The canoe struck a wing dam, capsizing, losing everything. The legging of one caught on the dam and the other saved both their lives only after a fierce struggle. I had capsized in a wind storm in that same canoe the next summer on Lake Bemidji. Had the bad luck been passed on? When we took to the canoe again, I confess to nervousness and irritability. I insisted on staying in the middle of the river and shied away from wing dams as a horse does a piece of white paper. But after an hour's labor, this had passed. We were in Mark Twain's land!

We paddled along the now unvexed stream in late afternoon, among green-clad islands, the western light streaking glorious and golden through the trees. It was just such a day

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

as Tom and Huck would have selected for an adventure. Adventures did not just happen to Tom, he had them "reg'lar" and well-planned, with the frills of Oriental mystery or European intrigue.

We saw Tom and Huck through the trees, as we threaded our way among islands. Then came their shouts of discovery and a rush to their canoe and a paddle to meet us. A few preliminary greetings and they had learned of the journey. With boyish exuberance, they offered to take us to some of their haunts, and we went venturing into Mark Twain's land. When we met Nigger Jim, he got out his hairball with the "spirits" inside, but it did not tell us to stay away from the water as it did Huck, and we knew now we would have good luck throughout the trip. Abreast Armstrong Island, we spied in the fading light of day, Hannibal, Missouri.

"Well," said Tom, "Guess we'll hafta leave you. Some folks have an idea we ain't real, you know, and if we was to appear and say who we was, they might put us in jail or civilize Huck here. He 'lows thet such ain't for him, so I stick by him."

Huck pointed the nose of their canoe toward the Missouri shore just as a steamboat came puffing upriver. We turned to warn our friends, but they had disappeared. Nigger Jim's "spirits" had worked. By seven o'clock canoe and outfit were safely stowed at Hannibal.

Hannibal was laid out in 1819, named for Hannibal Creek, which flowed through the town, so-called for the Carthaginian general. Hannibal became famous when the works of Samuel L. Clemens or "Mark Twain" achieved popularity. It is remembered as the home of Tom and Huck, Aunt Polly, Nigger Jim, Joe Harper, the Widow Douglas, Amy Lawrence, Miss Watson and Judge and Becky Thatcher.

The first thing we did was to visit the two-story wind and water-aged frame home of Samuel L. Clemens, at the foot of one of the streets that hugs the bluffs. We were greeted by a benignant, white-haired, old lady, a genial, gentle soul, who suffered with rheumatism, but who was eager to tell us all she could about Mark Twain. She had been here for years, had seen Mark Twain, and knew most of the gossip and everything of interest about Hannibal.

---

## MARK TWAIN'S HOME

---

"Did you know Mark Twain?" we asked.

"Never spoke a word to him in my life," she confessed. "But I saw him many, many times, when he came back here from lecture tours or trips all over the world."

"What sort of a man was he?"

"Same as you or me. He ate, drank, wore clothes, for years had a hard job payin' his debts and generally was like any man, doing wild, foolish things, such as takin' walks in the rain, going on dangerous trips abroad, making speeches and lectures. But he was a good soul: liked books and fine things."

She examined us closely, our tanned visages and arms, our rough clothes, camera and field glasses. Her curiosity winning the struggle, she asked who we were and where we were going. We explained.

"Landy me, you boys," she ejaculated, when she recovered her breath. "What won't you think of. You might be Mr. Clemens' grandsons, you're that crazy. He'd a done just that sort of thing when he was a harum-scarrem boy like you two. Can't you settle down and hold jobs, or are you newspapermen?"

I confessed that I was, and offered to take her for a moonlight ride in the canoe.

"Ride in one of them things, in a leaky, treacherous canoe on that sneaky, tricky river? I wouldn't set foot in a canoe if it was in a bath tub, let alone on that great big river. You couldn't get me onto the river in anything smaller than a packet. I value my life, I do, and at my age to go out in a canoe. When I die I have a mind to die in my bed, properly dressed, on good dry land!"

It was growing late. We had eaten last at Quincy. But this motherly old soul was not through. She made us promise to say our prayers every night, thank God for keeping us safe from that tricky river and tippy canoe until we drowned, write our mothers twice a week, not let alligators get us, take quinine to prevent malaria, put iodine in our drinking water and to always keep our eyes on the river, for it had "powerful many moods." While she counseled us not to be "any more keerless" than we could help, she hobbled into the kitchen, returning to send us

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

away with a cookie apiece, a bribe to good behavior, just as Aunt Polly might have done with Tom and Huck.

We left Hannibal at five-thirty the next morning, at an hour when, as Huck said, "the east reddens and the west gets pearly white." A few minutes later we were below town. High on our right was Tom Sawyer's Cave, McDougall's Cave in the book, where Tom and Becky were lost. How Huck and Tom loved this river in their boyish, possessive way! How we loved it this morning. It was ours; we were alone on it.

Running the full length of Pike County, Illinois, is The Sny, a bayou or arm of the Mississippi. The early French named it Chenal Ecarte or "Crooked Channel," but the word has been corrupted. It starts about four miles above Hannibal and runs forty miles nearly to Clarksville. The first important levee in Illinois was built here in 1876, but in April of that year the river broke through and flooded the lowlands.

We changed our slogan "Twenty Minutes for Lunch" to "Twenty Miles Before Breakfast." Shortly after ten o'clock we reached Louisiana, Missouri, twenty-seven miles below Hannibal. Two oranges had constituted our fare. Running downhill away from the river, but not very fast or far, Louisiana sets behind a levee in Pike county, in which the first permanent settlement was made some miles downstream in 1808. The county was organized in 1818 when Missouri was a territory, and for a time was called the "State of Pike." Samuel K. Caldwell founded the present town in 1818. It was named for Louisiana Bayse, later Mrs. David L. Tombs. Pike county is famous for John Hay's *Pike County Ballads*, wherein is found the famous lines:

*He weren't no saint, them engineers  
Is all pretty much alike,—  
One wife in Natchez-under-the-Hill  
And another one here, in Pike.*

To appreciate this saga, one must hear it given in the engine room by one of the crew, with paddles chunking and steam hissing.

Across the river is Pike county, Illinois, bounded on the west by the Mississippi and on the east by the Illinois River.

---

## *MYSTERIOUS FIRST SETTLER*

---

Who the first settler was no one knows, but remains indicate that he lived in a cave near the Mississippi River banks. Our charts showed Clarksville, Missouri, ten miles downriver, with Hamburg, Illinois, fifteen miles farther. We lunched at Clarksville, an old, old town, settled before 1812. It was platted in 1819 by John Miller, later a governor of Missouri, and nicknamed by rivermen "Appletown," because of the quantities of apples shipped from here. It was named for William Clark, governor from 1818 to 1820. Lunch eaten at this old place, early afternoon found us again following the beckoning river toward the Gulf.

## CHAPTER XVII

### *Hamburg and Calhoun County; La Salle; the Illinois River, Lake Levels, the Sewage Controversy; the "St. Paul"; Alton.*

**A**T CLARKSVILLE the bluffs come sharply to the Missouri shore. From Hannibal to Clarksville the river follows the Missouri bluffs: beautiful little brothers of the upriver crags but lacking the grandeur of the stretches above Dubuque. Below Keokuk there is a marked change in the river; it is larger, hungrier, with better current. Sandbars stretch out opposite bends; the river sweeping around curves sometimes reveals large sand banks. We see more towheads and remember Huck Finn's definition of a towhead as "a sandbar that has cottonwoods on it thick as harrow-teeth."

We left Clarksville with a promise to visit it in cider time, for its cider is famous, and paddled toward Hamburg, which we reached in mid-afternoon, a waterside village in Calhoun county, Illinois. Calhoun county has neither a negro nor railroad. It is the apple growing and shipping center of Illinois.

"Sonny," one oldster said, "This isn't the month to see Hamburg. Come back in September or October when we're at our best, when the *Belle a' Calhoun, Alabama* and other packets are busy running to St. Louis and back. Apples are packed in barrels the length of the street, thousands of barrels, tier upon tier, millions of apples. The air is sweet with their smell."

A great procession of apple pies, apple tarts, apple cake, applesauce, apple dumplings, apple turnovers, and baked apples passed before our eyes. Apple blossom time, with its heavy, sweet fragrance, its delicate yet vivid pink and white blossoms, could not compete with the red juicy apple and its "by-products."

Our charts showed a village at Sterling Landing, seven miles below Hamburg, but the river had washed away the landing, so we paddled a mile below where it once stood, and

---

## NEAR-RELIGIOUS CONTROVERSY

---

pulled ashore. I went to talk things over with the inhabitants of a house where we heard the ululations of a dog. Upon approaching the house, I found that the dog was dogs. They came running out, snarling, making enough noise to frighten a thirsty man after Missouri moonshine. A woman and brood of children followed.

"Don't you come no closer or those dogs'll eat you 'live. Wait for pap. He's comin' across the river in a skiff. Be here d'rec'ly," the woman warned laconically.

I cut a stout willow to use on the dogs in case "pap" was unfriendly. When "pap" finally appeared, reeking with bucolic dubiety, I asked if we might camp around here. He said the mosquitoes would be too bad, and permitted us to use an empty summer house. "Pap," whose name was Bill Keaton, no relation to "Buster" he assured us, said they had no food in the house and wouldn't have until tomorrow, suggested a shanty behind the levee where we might get a "snack."

This was our first experience with levees. Levees are earth embankments built up to keep the waters from spreading after they overflow their normal river bed and banks. This levee was barely ten feet high, heavily overgrown with grass and weeds. A road or ramp led over it. After several hundred feet over a soggy road, we reached the shack and knocked.

"Waddya want?" A most cordial greeting.

"Bill Keaton, across the levee, said you'd be glad to cook us a couple of meals if we'd pay you for them."

"Bill Keaton's wrong. I jest let my fire go out and the day's been too hot for me to wanna build another."

"We don't want much," Allen interposed. "A few eggs, some potatoes, bread, butter, jelly and milk."

"Takes heat to fry eggs and potatoes, don't it? No, I won't work all night for you rich No'therners. Me an' Pap's tired and got to get up early to go to ho'in," replied the indigenous woman.

Here we were, tired and sleepy, asking a very poor family to accept pay for supplying us with almost any kind of a meal, and they were refusing. I decided it was time for a joke.

"But, we aren't Northerners," I protested. "We're Cosmopolites!" Allen almost choked.



---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

"Cosmop-oh-whats? Well, we're Baptists, an' we don' hanker to take up with any new fangled religion."

After much persuasion, they sold us two quarts of milk, Allen in a particularly lucid moment having brought a two-quart pail. We handed them twenty cents. They returned two cents proudly, refusing to be bribed or bought by "No'thern" gold.

We returned over the now dark road, which was overhung with trees, and studded with stumps, rocks and mudholes. At the top of the levee, while the crickets cricked, the birds chirped and the frogs croaked, we dined on two quarts of milk, taking turns from opposite sides of the pail. Though still warm, it was so good we counted the swallows to make sure it was evenly divided. Then, with sixty-three miles behind us, the record thus far, we turned in. The mosquitoes droning outside lulled us to sleep.

Four-twenty found us on the river, paddling by channel lights, patches of mist and fog still around us. Off Sandy Island, as the sun sent the stars helter skelter, we passed the U. S. *Nauvoo*, five miles below Sterling Landing. In these early daybreak hours we made good time, paddling like well-oiled machines. Birds peeped in surprise as we passed their nests close to shore. Ripples of the river made music. The colors of the stream constantly changed. Soon after six o'clock, in a flood of morning light that gave life to the dew on the foliage and bejewelled the river, we reached Cap au Gris. Bare rocks jut out in frills and waves. From Cap au Gris the river skirts the Illinois bluffs for fifteen miles. In Missouri the bluffs are far back, petering out below Sterling Landing. At Beach Landing below Cap au Gris, we passed the *Alabama* of St. Louis and two hours later the *Belle of Calhoun*.

Our morning was spent on the big curve at the lower end of Calhoun county. It was a great time for paddling, with a cool, gentle breeze, good current, and variety of scenery. We passed the Calhoun quarries, from which limestone is taken for use in building wing dams. Off Dardenne Island, nine miles above the Illinois mouth we were less than six miles across country from St. Charles Bend in the Missouri. At eleven o'clock, July 22, thirty-three miles below "Pap" Keaton's,

---

## WE FIND LASALLE'S TRAIL

---

we paddled past Island Number 526, and there, sparkling in the morning sunlight, was the Illinois River, third largest tributary to the Mississippi.

The river is named for the Illini Indians, and the word means "The men, perfect and accomplished," "Real Men," or "The Men." Where now we drifted was once halfway point between the seats of French authority in America, Quebec and New Orleans. Up this stream in August 1673 Joliet and Marquette returned to the Great Lakes after descending to the Arkansas mouth, the first white men to ascend it.

Of all the men who have traversed this stream, none is more inspiring than that undespairing Norman, that prince of explorers, Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle. Here was a man who could have won high honors at the glittering court of *Roi Soleil*, Louis the Fourteenth of France. Instead, he left a trail across this continent that for daring, steel-like tenacity, matchless faith, heroism and determination is unrivaled in the annals of exploration.

La Salle came to Canada at the age of twenty-three in 1666, soon becoming a partner and representative of Count Frontenac. La Salle believed the Mississippi would lead to the California Sea, which he was seeking. It was his ambition to build a chain of forts from Niagara to the mouth of the Mississippi, around which he visualized settlements of French and Indians, carrying on a vast trade in furs and products of this wild western land. He ascended the St. Joseph River from Lake Michigan in 1679 to the site of South Bend, Indiana, portaged to the Kankakee and followed it to the Illinois. The Frenchmen built Fort Crevecoeur or Fort Heartbreak, near the site of Peoria and Fortress St. Louis on the site of Utica.

At last the great day came. They left Fort Crevecoeur, La Salle and Tonty, with a party of *voyageurs* and Indians. The chief of the Illinois, with whom La Salle's party had wintered, warned them of the lower river, of hostile tribes, raging whirlpools, devouring monsters, sickness and death. He feared that the white men who carried thunder in their hands would make alliances with southern Indians and that the Illinois would be crushed between them and the fierce Iroquois. We, too, were warned of the lower river whirlpools,

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

poison snakes, alligators, eddies, storms, fever, thieves. La Salle and his men descended the Illinois River, and on February 6, 1682, paddled out onto the great expanse of the Father of Waters.

The Illinois River has long been the center of controversy because of the dumping of Chicago sewage into the Chicago River, which empties into the Illinois, and the diversion of 10,000-cubic-second-feet of water from Lake Michigan. Politicians for years have claimed to be sponsors of the Great Lakes to the Gulf waterway, but Joliet first advocated such a system in 1673. Analyzed to its last point, it is not a matter of sentiment or principal, but of cold dollars, an economic question. The two chief factors in the fight are sewage and diversion. Chicago dumps its sewage into the Chicago River. It also wants an outlet to the Gulf. To wash the filth of its sewers from Lake Michigan, and to have a channel to the Gulf, Chicago must have water. The contention that Lake Michigan water must be used to wash Chicago sewage down the Illinois River plainly is ridiculous. There is no more reason for polluting the Chicago and Illinois rivers than for contaminating Lake Michigan. The answer is to build sewage disposal plants much faster than is being done. The argument that water is needed for transportation between the Great Lakes and the Mississippi has more merit. But 10,000-cubic-second-feet will not be required. There will be a compromise satisfactory to neither side, but fair to both.

We made a trip to Chicago for the *Times-Picayune*, after reaching St. Louis, studied the whole controversy, and came down the Chicago Drainage Canal and Illinois River. Engineers have proven both sides conclusively. I piled through books, pamphlets, briefs, listened to engineers and publicity purveyors, and was thoroughly convinced several times that the Great Lakes will be dry within twenty-five years if diversion is continued, about as dry as the country is under prohibition, and that the world is in league to prevent Chicago from achieving her manifest destiny. Light, power, traction, real estate, shipping interests, ship, barge and engineering companies, manufacturers, lawyers, editors and politicians all

---

## *DIVERSION DIFFICULTIES*

---

cite limitless literature to prove their side right, the rest of the world wrong.

Allen was the only person with whom I discussed the problem who remained sane and impartial. Everyone else tried to convert, convince or convict me. I am not a participant in this fray. I own no land on which terminals might be built, have no shares in light or power companies concerned, own no stock in manufacturing plants that might benefit by cheaper freight rates, and am not running for office. I can afford to be unbiased. Chicago must build enough disposal plants to care for its sewage and free the Chicago River from the horrible pollution that, propagandists notwithstanding, does exist. Economic forces demand that some water continue to be sent down the Chicago and Des Plaines rivers into the Illinois, providing a deep enough channel to permit transportation and cheaper freight rates in the Mississippi Valley. The Great Lakes to the Gulf route cannot be held up by eastern capitalists, politicians and power magnates, any more than the St. Lawrence waterway can be delayed much longer by local selfishness.

The Chicago Drainage Canal runs from the Chicago River twenty-eight miles to Lockport, where it empties into the Des Plaines. The Illinois and Michigan Canal, between Joliet and La Salle, opened in 1848, covers ninety-seven miles. It is almost obsolete, though still used by small craft. The new canalization project will be large enough to permit tonnage sufficient to make barge and steamboat operation profitable investments. Some water is needed from Lake Michigan to aid this. Government engineers estimate that the present diversion raises the Mississippi two feet at the Illinois mouth and one foot at Alton.

The Panama Canal destroyed the old system of rates, reacted unfavorably on the entire middle west and Mississippi Valley, even on Chicago, aiding tremendously the eastern and western seaboards. The people of the Mississippi Valley demand an equalization of rates. Only part of them will benefit by the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence route. A completed nine-foot channel from the Illinois mouth to Chicago and up the Mississippi to the Twin Cities, and a nine-foot or deeper channel south from there to New Orleans will help to readjust the

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

rate structure in the mid-continent, striking down some of the handicaps created by unfair freight rates. Add to these the Missouri to Kansas City, the Ohio from Pittsburgh to Cairo, the Cumberland and Tennessee, and we have thousands of miles of inland waterways that will aid the interior of the country in the present unprofitable competition with the industrial seacoasts.

We paddled across the mouth of the Illinois shortly before noon, arriving at Grafton for lunch. Two large barges were under construction there.

From the mouth of the Illinois to the mouth of the Missouri River is twenty-two miles. In the upper sixteen miles to Alton the Mississippi hugs the Illinois bluffs. Below Alton the bluffs recede from the river. Seven miles below the mouth of the Illinois River, in Missouri, we passed the village of Portage, known in history as Portage des Sioux, because across here the Sioux portaged and escaped an Osage war party which went down the Missouri and up the Mississippi. From the Mississippi to the Missouri it is two miles across low lands. The Indians portaged to save a thirty-five-mile paddle, half of which was against swift current. The carry was from abreast Eagles Nest Island in the Mississippi to Pelican Bend in the Missouri River. The French village of Portage des Sioux was located here about 1780, the Americans coming later, naming it Portage.

Three miles below Portage, opposite Piasa Island, we passed the Piasa rocks, bluffs on which early explorers reported seeing the painted bird of Piasa. There are various accounts of the wierd figure, painted high on the stupendous crags, where they jutted from the river. The Piasa bird was an object of worship and reverence to the Indians.

Two miles above Alton, off the mouth of Brick House Slough, we met the steamer *St. Paul* of St. Louis, advertised as the largest steamboat on the river. I wanted a picture, so we paddled to within a dozen yards of this huge excursion craft. The *St. Paul* is a side wheeler, which explains the difficulty into which we paddled. Stern wheelers send little waves from the bow and large waves from the paddlewheel at the stern. These waves move obliquely toward shore, and are

---

## THE ST. PAUL INCIDENT

---

cut through and ridden easily. The sidewheeler does not throw out oblique waves as does the sternwheeler, but sends the same little waves from the bow. Instead, with a huge wheel on each side, it sucks a great bore which follows after it.

We paddled as close as we thought safe, waved to the pilot and watched the floating pleasure palace churn its way upstream, white and glittering, flags flying, band playing, the black smoke belching behind. Then we cut through the little teeth waves made by the bow, and congratulated ourselves upon riding the waves of such a big vessel so easily. Too soon! One hundred yards behind the vessel, rushing upstream, came a bore, rolling over and over, three great billows piling pell-mell upriver. We rose on the first one nicely, the canoe dropping perfectly into the trough. The second wave followed too soon. *The Charles H. Curley of St. Paul* buried its nose. We gave tremendous strokes and the partly filled canoe rose. It poised a moment on the crest of the second wave, then dove into the trough, slapping with a thud that sounded as though it had splintered the boards. The third huge comber was upon us before we could get straight. I twisted the paddle desperately, turning the craft so the wave struck Allen full force, knocking him back against the duffle. But the seaworthy old canoe rose again, with a wallowing movement, so filled with water that it groaned down into the third trough with a heavy plunk. Allen started to bail, and, after pushing the canoe through several smaller waves, I did the same thing. The outfit was soaked. Allen looked as though he had been swimming.

"Nice little plaything," Allen commented as he threw several little fish out of the canoe.

We were near the end of what United States Army engineers term the Upper River, the first of three phases recognized by government engineers, extending from the Twin Cities to the Missouri mouth, six hundred and sixty-four miles. In general over this stretch, the bluffs are high, not far apart. The river has wandered from bluff to bluff, but the wandering has been slow. Banks are more permanent than below the Missouri, material in the stream bed is less subject to erosion because it is coarser, the water clearer. Compared with the Missouri, it is a clearwater stream, free from floating drift.

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

Half an hour after the *St. Paul* incident, we beached the canoe at Alton, laid everything on the baked mud bank, washed the canoe, and by four o'clock all was thoroughly dried and repacked. With our sailor hats precariously perched on our heads, we set out to explore the city. It was settled in 1817 and named for a New Hampshire town, which took its title from Alton, England. Jean Baptiste Cardinal, a French trader, is credited with being the first white man to locate here, in 1783. An Indian trading post was conducted until 1807.

Elijah Parish Lovejoy, school teacher, minister and journalist, the first martyr in the cause of freedom of the slaves, was murdered November 7, 1836, by a mob at Alton, while he was standing guard over his press of the *Alton Observer*, which he published.

At the levee at Alton a crowd of urchins ran up to us as we finished packing the canoe. One shouted,

"Hey mister, what has four eyes and can't see?"

"A potato," replied Allen.

"Two dead horses," I suggested.

"Naw," one called, grinning in glee. "You're blind, too. The Mississippi has four eyes, but can't see."



"It poised a moment on the crest of the second wave . . . ."

## CHAPTER XVIII

*We reach the mouth of the Missouri River and arrive at St. Louis; the Mississippi-Warrior Service or Federal Barge Line.*



SCARCELY five o'clock as we paddled out into the current at Alton, St. Louis bound; the Missouri River two hours downstream. For years we had heard of it, read of it. We had been constantly warned of its *debouche* into the Mississippi. In the growing light we skirted the Illinois shore, two miles below the city passing Alton Slough, where government steamboats and other craft spend the winter. A sleepy sun blinked over the hills, a wan sun, wearied by its labors of the past fortnight.

Two miles above the Missouri mouth and six below Alton, we passed the mouth of Wood River, site of the Lewis and Clark camp in 1804, before Captain Meriwether Lewis and Captain William Clark embarked on their journey to the Pacific.

At six-thirty we were abreast the mouth of the Missouri River. The sun sent its rays glittering across the vast expanse where the clear, sparkly-blue Mississippi and the tawny, yellow outpouring of the Missouri, the two mighty streams of the continent, become one. Our first sight of the Missouri, entering the Mississippi in two great rivers around Mobile Island, was disappointing. We had heard tales of vast eddies, rapids, whirling back-waters, chunks of mud in swirls, until we had pictured a Niagara unleashed. We felt ourselves caught in increased currents, tugs of undertows. We had to paddle with greater care. But we saw no such river as we had expected. The canoe bobbed, twisted, pulled toward one shore, then the other, in spite of our attempts to hold it true, but it was not hurled into an abyss, seething waters, or dashed against a bank. It dawned upon us that this anomalous river, which so awed explorers, was a greater river than most persons realized, but much different than they imagined. Explorers always told of the Missouri when it was on a rampage, sending maddened



---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

currents into the Mississippi when that river, too, was in flood. We were seeing it under ordinary circumstances, when it was just a great river, not a rampant, raging monster, a profligate tributary, devouring, scouring, devastating everything with which it came into contact.

Out of this mouth millions of tons of water pour daily, from Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Minnesota, Iowa and Missouri and the far-off provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan, nearly half a million miles of drainage area. Had the course of the empire been from west to east, the Missouri would have been considered the Father of Waters, instead of a tributary, and the Mississippi would have been the longest river in the world, 4,200 miles, instead of the twelfth longest. It would have been longer than the Amazon, which is 3,800 miles; the Nile, 3,766; the Yangste, 3,400.

We rested on our paddles and watched the wedding of the waters. The Missouri colored our river with brown mud splotches, which spread out thinner and lighter. Waters heavily laden with detritus mingled with our clear stream. We saw branches, trees and debris, evidences of its leonine rapacity; at all stages of water the Missouri carries vast amounts of sediment. Famous for its shifting channel, its scouring, its omniverous appetite, its ruthlessness, we expected momentarily that it would try to end our trip. We remembered the warnings received continually since leaving St. Paul. "When you strike the mouth of the Missouri you'll have plenty of trouble." What cared we for extra current, more mud, added debris? We were in condition and welcomed any adventure. We were in great spirits. We would not even argue over which was the greatest stream. Sufficient the fact that the Missouri is considered an affluent to the stream we loved so much. Those who have traversed the Mississippi can consider no other stream more important. The Father of Waters, slightly on the rise, proudly refused to yield its clear flood to the muddy tributary, and for miles the two streams flowed side by side, the Missouri on the west shore, but the tawny color finally enveloped all.

---

## WE NEARLY TIP OVER

---

In one Indian tongue Missouri is "Living at the mouth of the river"; in another "Muddy." The first whites to see the mouth of this stream were the Joliet party, July 1, 1673. The Indians called it the Pekittansi or the Pekitanoui, the river of the Missouris. The first steamboat to ply the Missouri River was the *Independence*, which in May 1819 ascended the stream to Boonville, near the mouth of the Chariton River, about two hundred miles. Cotton gave the impetus to steamboats on the lower Mississippi; furs were the great commodity of the Missouri. The best steamboat years on the "Big Muddy" were from 1855 to 1860. From St. Louis alone dozens of huge boats went each year. Soon after the Civil War the railroads began strangling steamboats along the Mississippi. Then they cut off the Missouri trade at Council Bluffs, at Kansas City in the seventies, at Bismarck in 1872, and the final blow was given at Helena in 1887. Steamboats had done their work, helped to settle a continent, given a flamboyancy, to what otherwise would have been a drab, drawnout development.

At Alton, we talked with Captain Eugene H. Webb a steamboatman who has known the Mississippi and Missouri for thirty years. We had been given so much conflicting advice as to what to do at the Missouri mouth that we were bewildered. Captain Webb said to stay in mid-stream when we passed the mouth, explaining that if we tried to cut across we would be battling the two currents when they were fighting each other. If we got too near the Illinois shore, we would be where the waters of the Missouri hurl the Mississippi against the bank, creating back eddies and cross whirls. He warned us to keep away from cutting banks, to sleep on islands when possible and to avoid toughs in the lower river towns. Following his instructions, we stayed well out on the amplified river and were swept along by the strong current. Several miles below the Missouri mouth, two towers arose before us, like embattled fortresses in which the fair lady is imprisoned by the cruel villainous uncle. Unromantically, they were intake towers from which water is piped to the city filtering plant.

In passing these towers, I was so anxious to get pictures that I nearly upset the canoe and lost contents, camera and canoeists. The current rushing between the towers was the

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

strongest on the river. I stood up to get a picture of the right hand tower, with the Chain of Rocks behind. The Chain of Rocks shoots the current out into midstream. I took the first view, turned the film and whirled around in the canoe. As I snapped the second tower, the current rushed us by them at motor boat speed. An eddy twisted us, the canoe bobbed and I fell. As I careened, Allen braced himself and pulled in the other direction, throwing me into the bottom of the canoe. Allen was too full for utterance but in time he remarked about persons who cakewalked in canoes.

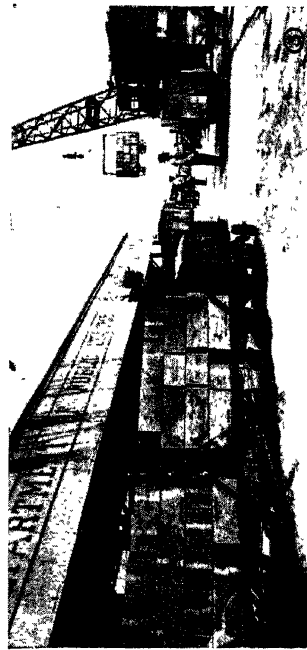
We were now on the second phase of the Mississippi, known to engineers as the Middle River. It extends two hundred miles from the Missouri to the Ohio mouth. Though the river takes on the character of the Missouri, the regulation methods are much the same as on the upper Mississippi, closing side channels, narrowing the river bed and revetting caving banks. Below the Missouri mouth the bluffs are farther apart, beds and banks erode more easily, the river wanders more, the water is heavily charged with sediment.

Two miles below the Chain of Rocks, we rounded Sawyers Bend, so-called because snags or "sawyers" planted themselves here. One end of a log or tree becomes imbedded and the other bobs up and down in the current, like a saw. Rivermen know this place as a "steamboat graveyard": since 1833 more than thirty boats and barges have been wrecked here. Planters, another river menace, are trees grown to the bottom of the river with their pronged tops sticking jaggedly upward. Wooden islands are masses of waterlogged driftwood, lying just below the surface. Even above Sawyers Bend we were within the metropolitan area of St. Louis, not a city of dreams to us, but the greatest city on the river, half-way mark of the journey.

Boats were on both sides of the river, some wrecks, some still drearily plodding their way, a few young and jaunty. East St. Louis was on our left, the smoke of its manufacturing plants hanging over the sky. At ten o'clock July 25, we came abreast the Streckfus Steamboat Line wharfboat, in the shadow of the Eads bridge, twenty-seven miles below Alton, twelve hundred and ten from the source of the Mississippi River.



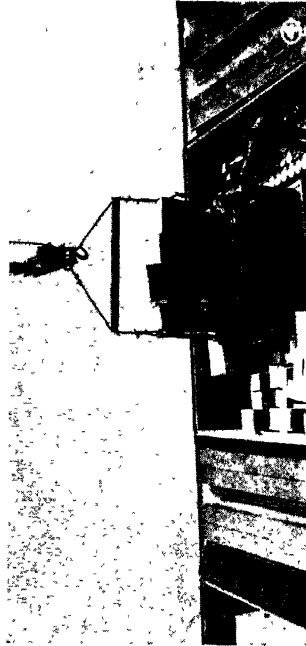
(1) A sand sucker in the Mississippi River off St. Louis. The sand and water are pumped up out of the stream, and into barges, from which the water runs, leaving sand.



(3) The St. Louis docks, municipal wharves, conducted by the Department of Public Utilities. Here truckloads of freight are shown being brought from the docks.



(2) Allen Sulerud in the bow, and the author, ready to leave St. Louis, after the canoe had been stored two weeks in the Streckfus wharfboat.



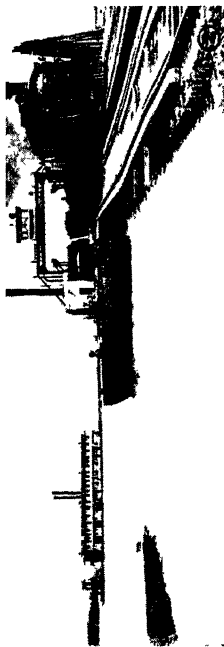
(4) The truck is picked up bodily and lowered into the hold of a barge of the Mississippi-Warrior Service or Federal Barge Line.



(1) Loading a Federal Barge Line boat, the self-propelled barge Birmingham, with a shipment to be taken downriver to New Orleans at a saving of twenty per cent of the rail rate.



(3) The Charles H. Curley of St. Paul bears its crew over the site of Old Kaskaskia, where once stood the Little Paris of the Wilderness. Though it has destroyed the site of the old seat of the government of Illinois, it is not content, and continues to eat away the banks.



(2) Car transfer at Little Rock Landing, Missouri, above Sainte Genevieve. The engine runs out on trucks that float upon the water and link with the car transfer when it lands. It is shown here taking off a string of freight cars, from the car transfer Sainte Genevieve.



(4) Young America "an naturel." We snapped these boys at Grand Tower, Illinois, as they were sliding down the slippery mud banks into the water, using only their original costumes for the plan.

---

## CAPT. STRECKFUS GREET'S US

---

The first person to greet us in St. Louis was one we would rather have seen than the mayor or a delegation from the Chamber of Commerce. We pushed our canoe, a mouse among elephants by comparison with the *St. Paul*, *J.S.*, *Golden Eagle*, *Bald Eagle* and *Alabama*, up on the levee and stepped out. Before us stood Captain John Streckfus, owner of the Streckfus Line. Nobody embodied so much of the Mississippi River for me as Captain Streckfus. Even when young the love of the river and steamboats was strong within me. I went whenever possible to the levee at St. Paul to watch the occasional visits of excursion and other steamboats, to listen in wonder to the engines, and to walk in awe over the decks of any boat I could get aboard.

After a Sunday school excursion when I was a little fellow, the boat was docking at the St. Paul levee. Captain Streckfus was standing beside the stage. With childish impatience and the desire to be first ashore, I jumped from the boat, missed my footing and fell backwards as the steamer edged against the wharf. I would have been crushed between the boat and wharf had not Captain Streckfus caught me by the jacket. Little wonder then, that his was a finer welcome than I could have received now from anyone else. In the two decades that had passed since then, this river leader had grown in my mind until he ranked with Captain Roald Amundsen and Teddy Roosevelt. About him always was the lure of the great river, life, romance, the spell of the unknown.

St. Louis! The metropolis of the Mississippi Valley! At the wharfboat R. H. Johnston and A. C. Tucker, Mississippi Valley Association representatives met us. They entertained us, dined and drove us until our eyes and heads ached. We heard the praise of St. Louis sung, its virtues extolled, its sins glossed over, and its weather ignored. We heard it lauded and boosted until we did the same thing in our conversations with one another.

As conditions exist today the railroads are strangling the Northwest. Only water transportation on the Mississippi, Ohio and Missouri will enable states in the upper portion of the valley to remain in competition with the rest of the country. Excessive freight rates, caused by overcapitalization, parallel

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

lines and other remedial expenses that railroads have not seen fit to remedy, have gripped that part of this country lying between the Rockies and the Mississippi, and the Canadian border and St. Louis, so that business even in times of prosperity has not developed at a fraction the speed of the industrial east, where water rates have enabled the manufacturers to undersell in the markets of the world. The Mississippi Valley Association is seeking to remedy these conditions.

Closely linked with the Mississippi Valley Association, though in no way connected with it, is the Mississippi-Warrior Service, the Federal Barge Line, owned by the Inland Waterways Corporation, a government agency, which operates a freight carrying line between St. Louis and New Orleans, New Orleans and Mobile and Mobile and Birmingham, at the navigable head of the Warrior River, Alabama.

The founder of St. Louis was Pierre Laclède Liguist, known as Laclède. The New Orleans firm of Antonio Maxent, Laclède and Company obtained by royal charter from the French governor-general of Louisiana exclusive control of the fur trade with the Missouri and other tribes north to the River St. Pierre. To maintain closer connections than was possible from New Orleans, they proposed to establish a post nearer the scene of operations. Laclède left New Orleans August 3, 1763, in charge of seasoned frontiersmen, and three months later came upon the site of St. Louis. On St. Valentine's Day, February 14, 1764, Auguste Chouteau reached here, a fourteen-year-old prodigy of the wilderness, heading a party of thirty men. He felled the first tree and erected the post.

The trading post was not named for King Louis the Fourteenth, as were so many places, but for Laclède's patron saint, Louis the Fifteenth. The post often was called Laclède's Village. The first steamboat to reach St. Louis was the *General Pike*, August 12, 1815. Since then what a history its steamboats have given it. What stories the great stone levee can tell! It took one hundred and twenty days to pole a flatboat from New Orleans to St. Louis. In 1815 the *Enterprise* made it in the phenomenal time of twenty-five days. When that much loved Frenchman ascended the river in 1825, Lafayette spent ten days reaching St. Louis from New Orleans.

---

## LARGEST SPAN OVER STREAM

---

The largest span over the river is the Eads bridge at St. Louis, designed by Captain James B. Eads, who also built the jetties at the Mississippi mouth. It is 6,620 feet long, with the central arch of five hundred and twenty feet, and this two-story structure carries over its seventy-five foot width more traffic than any bridge across the river. Trains use the lower, and street cars, vehicles and pedestrians the upper level.

To this center of the country cargoes of untold wealth have come: from here they have gone. The yellow flood has carried southward and brought north golden harvests. Overland trade with oxen and mules, steamboats and packets, barges and keel-boats, and railroads have found this the geographical center of the land.

To the St. Louisan the city is all points of the compass. West begins with the Appalachians for the easterner: in St. Louis everything starts at the Mississippi. St. Louis is neither a southern city nor a northern one. While not cosmopolitan in the sense that are San Francisco, New Orleans and New York, it is a composite. With its flaming slogan "Nothing Impossible" it holds the heartstrings of the entire middle west. Anyone who visits the "Free City of the West," knows that person for person and day by day St. Louis has the finest people and the worst weather in the land.



## CHAPTER XIX

*Cahokia, oldest town in Illinois; Old Fort Chartres; Sainte Genevieve, oldest Missouri town; Kaskaskia; Chester.*



ELL, boys, don't tip over!"

Only the current, carrying us from the shelter of the Streckfus wharfboat, and memories of royal entertainment received as their guests, prevented us from returning to the levee to keep our promises to inflict several kinds of death upon R. M. Johnston and A. C. Tucker, if they mentioned capsizing. It was August 7. The hospitality had surpassed our dreams, and the weather had been strangely pleasant. Down our river twelve hundred and sixty-five miles lay our goal.

As we gained mid-stream, a veil of fog dropped and mist began to fall. Wind roughened the waters; they looked like a cartoon of a rough night at sea. Across the river lay East St. Louis. The first railroad in the country was in use in 1830. Here in 1837 was operating the "Coal Mine Bluff Railroad," owned by Governor Reynolds of Illinois; it carried fuel from his coal fields six miles away to the docks.

Slumbering happily three-fourths of a mile from the river and four miles below the Eads bridge, lies Cahokia, oldest town in Illinois. The Tamaroa and Cahokia tribes once occupied this site. They were living here when Father Pinet established a mission in 1699, since when continuous white occupancy can be traced. Almost from legendary days, Cahokia was the gathering place of the tribes of this region. Here they built great mounds: here eight miles from the Mississippi, is the finest relic of the mound people in the United States. The mounds are so great that some scientists declare they were natural rises, that it would have been impossible to have handled such great weights in early times, and that the Indians or their predecessors lacked the mental capacity to conceive

---

## FIRST AMERICANS IN ILLINOIS

---

or complete such an extensive plan of building. Others say they were built as temples.

From the tribes in this region, as from above, Joliet and Marquette heard that the lower river was full of fearful monsters, that they would be devoured by beasts or the river itself, that a great, roaring demon could be heard for leagues, and that even though they survived all these horrors, mists, fevers and heats would burn their lives out. We, too, heard tales of danger, of the Ohio mouth, of town toughs, malaria, robbers, sunstroke, thieves and bootleggers.

Soon after La Salle descended the Mississippi the first white village at Cahokia grew up, consisting of a group of mild-mannered, unprogressive *habitans* and *voyageurs*. Many married Indian women and made this village their headquarters. In 1699 the priests came, giving the place an air of permanence, naming it Cahokia, for *Saint Famille de Kaiouque*.

The most exciting day in the life of this village was in July 1778, when George Rogers Clark and his "Long Knives," as the Indians called Kentuckians, captured the village and surrounding country in the name of Virginia. The capture was effected without any fighting, through the aid of several French Kaskaskians who accompanied them. From here Clark set out to recapture Fort Vincennes from the British. These soldiers who took Cahokia and Kaskaskia were the first Americans to set foot in the Illinois country.

As we came abreast Cahokia the rain streamed down. Through the downpour five miles below St. Louis we sighted Jefferson Barracks. These barracks, gracing the low Mississippi bluffs in Missouri, were the first infantry training school established in this country, being created about July 10, 1826 and named for Thomas Jefferson. No other school of its kind was organized for more than fifty years later. The Barrack grounds comprise seventeen hundred acres, once part of the commons of the old village of Vide-Poche or "Empty Pocket." It was the base of operations against the Sacs and Foxes. Practically every regiment in the army had been represented here prior to 1861. Jefferson Barracks was made a military hospital at the outbreak of the Civil War. After the war it was used as a garrison, then as an engineer depot, later as a cavalry

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

post. During the World War thousands of recruits were sent here.

Just below Jefferson Barracks we had a peculiar experience. Seeing buildings after a stretch of bluffs, Allen declared we were opposite Quarantine. I maintained it was part of the barracks proper. We expressed our views in ordinary voices, not at all excited.

"You're past the barracks now. These buildings are Quarantine."

The voice came out of space. Allen turned and looked at me. I stared at him. Had it been possible, we would have glanced under the canoe.

"Did you hear anything?" I inquired.

"Yes, didn't you speak?"

"No, didn't you?"

"No."

We were two hundred yards from shore. The mist still hung low. We could not see Illinois; the Missouri shore looked hazy. We heard a chuckle, and,

"I said you were opposite Quarantine."

Studying the bank, we spied someone sitting on a rock at water's edge. He had been listening to us. From his location, he not only could be heard two hundred yards across the water, but in ordinary tones we talked to him. It is common knowledge that sounds carry across water, but we learned that when river acoustics are right, conversation may be plainly understood at great distances.

A mile below the Meramec mouth we came to Kimmswick, once called Montesano, noted for its pure spring waters. After hunting about the village we found a bakery and bought lunch. Thus fortified, we looked over the town before returning to the canoe to drift and eat. Kimmswick was laid out in October 1859, by Theodore Kimm. It is one of the prettiest, sleepiest places we passed. The houses and buildings were painted white, the fences whitewashed. It seemed as though a dozen Aunt Polly's and Tom Sawyer's had kept every boy in town busy all summer whitewashing picket fences.

At mid-afternoon we left Kimmswick. Crystal City was our destination for the night, thirty-three miles below the Eads

---

## ALLEN'S INNOCULATION "TAKES"

---

bridge. We were tired. Our Chicago trip was not the only cause. We had been given typhoid inoculations two days before leaving St. Louis. Allen's first shot had "taken" much harder than mine, and he was still weak and was getting weaker, but he stayed by his guns, although he grew paler each hour. At six o'clock we tied up above Cornice Rock at the mouth of Plain River and walked a mile to Crystal City.

Festus and Crystal City are really one. Festus, a bit up-stream and farther from the river, was platted in 1878; part of it was once known as Derby City. Crystal City is a "company town." Nearly everything in it belongs to and almost everybody is employed by the American Plate Glass Company. The headquarters were in Detroit, Michigan. The officers, intensely jealous of St. Louis, named the town New Detroit and did all business possible in Michigan. At the first annual meeting of the directors, the residents opposed the name and proposed Crystal City as a substitute.

Allen wanted only a bed and a cool room. The cool room was an impossibility, but we found a good bed at the hotel, bathed, and after foraging around town, I

found enough food of the kind he desired, returned and fed him. By morning Allen said he felt well enough to go on. I would have refused, but if he was going to be sick, I wanted him at Cairo with my brother, where he would receive competent care.



*Leaving a river town with food and our bottle.*

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

Upon returning to the canoe, we called roll and found half our navy incapacitated. He agreed, instead of walking back to town, to stretch out in the canoe, rest his febrile brow and let me paddle, stopping at the first town if he did not feel better. We pushed off at eight-thirty. I paddled alone all morning, through some of the finest scenery below St. Louis. The Missouri bluffs hugged the river's edge for twenty-five miles, almost to Sainte Genevieve. Down the great, winding river we went, around sand bars, islands and towheads, with the azure sky, sparkling waters, white bluffs and green foliage to give variety. The bluffs are less than five miles apart, so the river makes no wide sweeps. At mid-morning the *Jefferson* passed us downstream. Allen sat up about noon. We lunched as we drifted by Prairie du Rocher and Fort Chartres Landing, nineteen miles below Crystal City.

Prairie du Rocher two centuries ago flourished in the shelter of the Illinois bluffs five miles above Fort Chartres. Prairie du Rocher and St. Philip were established by Philippe François de Renault, director-general of mining operations of the Company of the West. They were built on Renault's land grant and laid out in the French manner, with commons and common fields. Renault introduced slavery into the Illinois country in 1720. The Kaskaskians, who felt very superior after the rebuilding of Fort Chartres, called St. Philip *Le Petite Village*.

Fort Chartres, the greatest stronghold constructed by the French in America, was a link in the chain of forts that was to extend from the Gulf to the Great Lakes as a barrier to England's colonial ambitions. Pierre Duque Boisbriant, a Canadian with the title of Commandant of the Illinois, cousin to Bienville, then governor of Louisiana, ascended the Mississippi from Mobile and built Fort Chartres on the east bank, completing it in 1720. It was named for the son of the then regent of France, Duc du Chartres. A village sprang up around it; the Jesuits established the parish of St. Anne de Fort Chartres; Boisbriant and his associates formed the Provincial Council of the Illinois, which for forty years dispensed justice, administered estates, regulated titles and ruled the colony under the civil law. It was the *chef-lieu* or seat of civil government, and military center of the Illinois country.

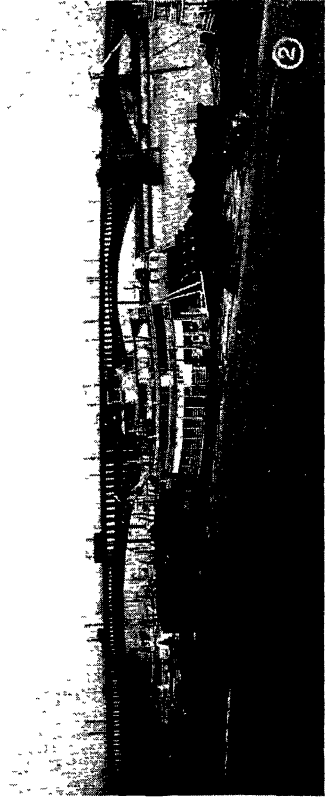


*The Alabama of St. Louis, a packet boat plying out of St. Louis,  
up the Mississippi River, one of the few packets  
found above the mouth of the Ohio.*



(1) The steamer *Cape Girardeau* leaving Chester, Illinois, up river bound, with Kaskaskia Island behind it and the Missouri lowlands in the distance.

(2) The St. Louis levee, with steamboats and the Eads Bridge. Save for the bridges at Thebes and Memphis, the river was, at the time of the trip, unspanned between St. Louis and the Gulf.



---

## THE GIBRALTER OF THE WEST

---

In 1725 Boisbriant replaced Bienville as governor of Louisiana. For some time things did not go so well at Fort Chartres. By 1740 the fort was out of repair, poorly supplied, deserted by many of its soldiers. The British won over the Indian allies. Abandonment of the fort was considered: the little village barely held its own. But in the fall of 1751 Chevalier de Makarty, major of engineers, an Irishman with a French commission, arrived with troops, artisans, laborers, tools, ammunition, and orders to replace the wooden structure with a stone fortress. A million crowns was spent in rebuilding. Completed, it was the Gibraltar of the West. The two decades after the rebuilding were years of unparalleled prosperity for this part of the French possessions.

Although France had ceded this territory to Great Britain by treaty of 1763, M. de St. Ange de Belle Rive held the fort, the only place in North America where the Bourbon flag flew. Major Loftus, ascending the Mississippi to take possession, was greeted with a volley at the bluffs, and returned to Pensacola. The cliffs now are called Loftus Heights. Several others tried and failed. Lieutenant Frazer came down the Ohio and up the Mississippi. Pontiac caught him, kept him all night in fear of being boiled alive, then shipped him by canoe express to New Orleans, with the information that a kettle was boiling ready for any other Englishmen who came that way. Not until October 10, 1765 when the famous Black Watch arrived, the Forty-Second Highlanders, did St. Ange surrender. The British named it Fort Cavendish.

Soil consecrated to France by La Salle had become British, but the Mississippi loved the French, who sang as they paddled over it, who rejoiced in its power. It knew that these *voyageurs* in their swift *pirogues* understood and loved it. Unable any longer to bear the British on its banks, it rose in the spring of 1772 and swept much of the land away, taking part of the fortifications. It never again was occupied.

An hour after lunch, we pulled up at Little Rock Landing a mile from Sainte Genevieve, oldest settlement in Missouri. Here we saw our first car transfer, an immense boat that carries trains across the river. We spent two hours watching it snort and puff its clumsy but powerful way back and forth



---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

loaded with cars. I noticed the little ferry which also operates at this point was named for a girl. It struck me as peculiar that practically every ferry I met on the river bore a girl's or woman's name.

"Why is it," I asked the owner and captain of the ferry, "That almost all of the ferries are named for girls?"

"Sonny," he replied, looking at me in disdain and speaking with withering scorn, "you evidently ain't never been married!"

After resting in the shade along the river bank, Allen felt better. He was determined to see Sainte Genevieve, sun and sickness notwithstanding. About 1720 a settlement was made at Sainte Genevieve by men from Kaskaskia, but the first positive record of an actual permanent village dates from 1735. *Le vieux village de Sainte Genevieve* was three miles south of the present town in "The Big Field."

Sainte Genevieve became nominally Spanish at the close of the Old French War in 1763, when England secured all of the French territory east of the Mississippi and Spain all on the west. The French were first attracted to the site by the springs containing salt. Though transferred to Spain Sainte Genevieve continued to prosper and grow. The French east of the river were bitterly anti-British, and chose to live in Spanish domain.

Leaving Sainte Genevieve, our next objective was Kaskaskia, an unremembered town. A century ago we should have followed the channel down the Missouri shore several miles and then across to Illinois, but a prank of the jocular river sent it directly across to where it broke through the narrow neck which separated it from the Okaw or Kaskaskia River, and destroyed the city. Along the great river we went, past sandbars and cutting banks, sweeping over the site of Old Kaskaskia, once the "Little Paris of the Wilderness." It lies beneath waters of a shifting stream; nothing but memories remain.

In the early eighteenth century Kaskaskia was the most important river village above New Orleans. Founded in 1707 at the extreme southern end of the American Bottoms, it was incorporated as a town in 1725 with special privileges from Louis XV of France. It was a town of tillers, trappers, traders, wilderness rovers who headquartered here, military, and artisans. When the French flag came down from Fort Chartres

---

## AN EARLY METROPOLIS

---

and Kaskaskia after the treaty of 1763, the sway of that nation east of the Mississippi ended for all time, ended a rule that began in America when the first French colony was established under Henry IV of France in 1604 at Port Royal, now Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia.

The most dramatic experience in the settlement's history was July 4, 1778, when Colonel George Rogers Clark captured Kaskaskia, and with it an inland empire, in the name of Virginia without a shot being fired. The territorial legislature of the Illinois territory met here in November 1812. Illinois was admitted as a state December 3, 1818: thus Kaskaskia was the only territorial capital and the first state capital. The legislators met at Kaskaskia in 1812 in an old building of rough limestone. The twelve members boarded with the same family; all lodged in the same room. Here the constitution of Illinois was drawn. When the state archives were moved to the new capital at Vandalia, in December 1820, one wagonload carried them. Kaskaskia remained county seat of Randolph county until 1847, three years after the great overflow practically completed the ravages the river had been making for several decades.

Rounding another bend we came to the Illinois bluffs, on the top of which in pre-Revolutionary days Fort Gage perched high above the Mississippi, eight miles above Chester. The fort was built during the Chickasaw War in 1736, repaired in 1756 and occupied by a French garrison during the "Old French War." The bluff where it stood still is known as "Garrison Hill." Fire destroyed the old structure in 1766 and not until the British occupied it in 1772, renaming it for General Thomas Gage, British commander in America, was serious effort made to improve the fort.

In the late afternoon we passed Menard, named for the first lieutenant governor in the state, Pierre Menard, a mile above Chester, opposite the lower end of the old river channel. The Illinois State Penitentiary and, on the bluffs, Hospital for Criminal Insane, are at Menard. On the yellow flood, lighted by the golden glow of the setting sun, we came to Chester at dinner time, as the sun and clouds were scattering wild shades and patterns over the valley. We ate! Then the food or climate

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

got into Allen's blood. He insisted upon climbing the hills to the top, where most of the town is located. I protested, having visions of paddling a corpse towards Cairo next day, the canoe crepe-bedecked, flags at half mast. But he insisted. What a climb! The view was worth it. It was wonderful in the star dusted night, with lights of the buildings below, ferries "*Edna*" and "*Ruth*" crossing the Mississippi to Clearyville on a dark banner which mystically waved its way up and down the black valley, channel lights beaming, and beyond all this, the vast void of the Missouri bottomlands.

Chester is county seat of Randolph county, which was organized by George Rogers Clark in 1778, and named for Edmund Randolph, a Virginia statesmen of the day. In 1780 a little colony, most of whom were members of Clark's forces, settled three miles east of Kaskaskia near the river. Chester's early years were marked by travail. In 1819 a company was organized at Cincinnati to purchase lands near the Junction of the Kaskaskia and Mississippi Rivers. Mrs James Smith, whose home had been in Chester, England, named the town in 1831. In 1830 a castor oil mill was built, a fact that will make small boys hate Chester. It flourished for several years, drawing business from all the surrounding country.

We stopped a man at Chester and asked the distance to Cairo by road, "Ky-ro? What do you mean, Ky-ro?" he replied "That's in Egypt. You mean Kay-ro--Kayro! Kay-ro, Illinois."

We retired, hoping that the river would not rise suddenly and make us parties to anything so ludicrous as the funniest steamboat trouble we had heard to date. The *Belle Air* was coming down the Mississippi on the flood of 1844. When she neared Chester, she seemed to lose all control. She left the channel, climbed across country on the flood, paraded down Chester's streets, knocked off the top of a three-story building, made history of a stone mill, and created several heaps of rubbish from what had been stone buildings. After this spree she continued to New Orleans, almost unscathed and unscratched. There she collided with a ferry and nearly sank before she was aided to the levee.

At Chester we overheard a conversation of two elderly women who stopped to exchange gossip.

---

*“THE GOOD OLD DAYS”*

---

“Did you get to the baptizing in the river Sunday?”

“Oh my, yes indeed. I never miss.”

“Wasn’t that lovely! Any drownings?”

“No, not a one,” somewhat sadly.

“Dearie me, that so?” Quite disappointed. “Not much excitement nowadays at baptizings as there once was.”

By nine o’clock we were sound asleep. That night a prisoner escaped from the penitentiary, but even the bells, whistles, and general commotion failed to disturb us.

## CHAPTER XX

*Wittenberg; Keel boatmen; Grand Tower; our first sandbar night; Cape Girardeau; Commerce; Bird's Point and Cairo.*



GOING to sleep all morning?"

The sick boy was well. Allen had dressed and started packing. I peered out of one eye, saw the clock, and five minutes later were loading the canoe. A late start and we wanted to make Cape Girardeau by night. My brother had arranged a "back to civilization party" for the next night at Cairo. Cairo was one hundred and fifteen miles downstream. Though we had made poor time since leaving St. Louis, Cairo two nights later still was possible.

Clearyville was laid out in 1871; nothing of importance has happened there since. This morning it was blanketed by fog, but sometime when the fogs lift Clearyville will have turned to dust like the *One-Horse Shay*. Allen, later explaining how dense the fog was, said I made him walk on the waters and pull the canoe with a rope, but that the fog grew so dense he lost his sense of direction and ran around in circles. Allen knows that was false. What really happened was that he fell asleep while I paddled. Two hours later the fog lifted and so hard had I labored that the canoe rested on top of the Missouri bluffs four miles from Chester.

The fog actually was so thick that for two hours we hugged the east bank, unable to see the shore more than ten yards away. The canoe and canvas covering the outfit were soaked. We were as wet as though it had rained. Near Liberty Island, while we were discussing the humidity and southern mists and preparing to take quinine, the sun dispelled the fog, and we passed the *Oleander*, Mississippi River Commission boat that tends lights, buoys and channel markings. At Grand Eddy we met the *Cape Girardeau*, prettiest packet on the river. The hours until we reached Grand Tower at noon were three of the most uncomfortable of the journey. The thermometer registered

---

## FIRST AMERICAN LUTHERAN COLLEGE

---

only eighty-seven, but the humidity was more than eighty percent. Down a beautiful stretch of river, past Cape Cinque Hommes, we saw Fountain Bluff, looming brightly in the intense morning sun.

Just below and within sight of Fountain Bluff, we passed the ferry *Bertha*, plying between Illinois and Wittenberg. This community was settled in 1838 by Germans and named for Wittenberg, Germany, "The Cradle of the Reformation," where Martin Luther nailed the ninety-five theses against the indulgences and burned the papal bull. The first Lutheran college in America was established December 9, 1839, at Altenburg, five miles west of here in a log cabin, by the founders of Wittenberg.

During the last quarter of the eighteenth century, the river grew more important commercially, creating a class of men called keelboatmen. By 1797 there were many keelboats, bearing produce, furs, and tallow to New Orleans. River pirates sprang up, fierce desperadoes with headquarters near Grand Tower and Natchez. They became so bold that boats were forced to travel in groups. So disastrous were inroads of the banditti that the Spanish governor in 1798 placed a fleet of armed boats on the stream, but it was many years before river piracy was stamped out.

Keelboats were large, raftlike structures, sometimes with a house or cabin, manned by sweeps, and steered by a sweep at the stern. Entire families often traveled on these boats with cargoes of fur, salt meats, farm produce, tallow, pork, hides, lumber, bear oil and flour. Returning, they labored against the current with loads of indigo, sugar, fabrics, cotton and rice. When the wind was favorable they used a sail, but during the sixty-five days we were on the river, the wind was downstream only five; three of these five it stormed. Four men at the sweeps working steadily, aided by the current, made from five to six miles an hour downstream. Voyages in flatboats, keelboats, or arks took months. They came down the Ohio, and the Mississippi, but seldom from above the Illinois mouth.

The upstream journey was labor. Often the current was so strong that sweeps and sails were not enough and additional aid was required. One method was the cordelle. The crew

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

would take a rope, usually about one thousand feet long, and pull the boat upstream from shore. Another method was poling. Equipped with poles twenty feet long, the men would brace them on the river bed and push as they walked downstream. Reaching the end of the boat, they would pull up the poles, run to the bow and repeat the process. Warping consisted of taking a rope as far upriver as possible, tying it to a tree or rock and pulling in the slack. These trips took two months to Galena from Cairo, and four months to St. Louis from New Orleans. From one to sixty men were required to operate a keelboat upstream. The prodigious labor of manipulating these boats attracted only the brawny, boisterous and bellicose.

Though different in construction, the early boats were all classed as keelboats; the same boats bore different names in various communities. In general there were the keelboat, batteau, flatboat, Mackinaw, barge, galley and bull-boat. Some batteaux, large boats with rounded ends resting high in the water, carried eighty to ninety tons, with a crew of one man to each ton of freight. But a small percentage of the craft that reached New Orleans started back upriver against the swift current. Most of them were sold for lumber.

As we were paddling peacefully along, Allen turned and faced me, shouting, "I can outrun, outhop, outjump, throw down, drag out and lick any man in the country. I'm a Salt-river roarer. I love the wimming and I'm chockful of fight."

I stared at him, wondering whether to hit him with the paddle or upset the canoe. I was positive the heat had gone to his head.

"And how do you like that?"

"Oh, that's fine, if you really mean it," I countered, playing safe, since he had the hatchet and iron tent stakes in the bow. Allen explained that he had recited the boast of Mike Fink, most famous of the half-alligator-and-half-man keelboatmen who lived in the days when the Mississippi was more flamboyant and vital than early steamboatmen knew.

These flatboatmen, who proudly called themselves half-horse-and-half-alligator, were dangerous enemies: death came hard to them. In those days of daring and danger, the prize was to the strong, the finest fighter was the best fellow: rough-

---

## FIRST SANDBAR NIGHT

---

and-tumble laws prevailed; the brawniest brute survived. They alternated their labors and fights with drinking and singing. To accompaniment of banjo or fiddle they sang of home and mother, liquor and women. A fearless, lustful, boisterous life the keelboatmen lived, one possible only in a young land where wilderness challenged and rivers beckoned. The first through trip by flatboat from the Upper Ohio to New Orleans of which there is record, was in 1782. In the next four decades their numbers increased rapidly. As late as 1850, long after the steamboat's advent, these keelboatmen continued to swear and sweat their roaring, rollicking way over the turgid, untamed stream.

We rested two hours at Grand Tower, and saw the *Iowa* and a Barrett boat pass, upriver bound. It was thirty miles from Chester to Grand Tower: the "Cape" lay the same distance below. Darkness fell before we reached our objective. We fought all afternoon against an upstream wind. The sun beat upon us until after six o'clock, then disappeared behind the Missouri hills. The sunset burst luxuriously, prodigally, upon the river, and faded away. Cape Girardeau was still not in sight. We rounded a bend and saw lights twinkling far downstream. We paddled on: it grew darker. At eight o'clock a look at our charts by moonlight showed that we were opposite Devil's Island, fifty-seven miles below Chester.

We pulled ashore on Devil's Island, three miles from Cape Girardeau, and hauled the canoe up on a sandbar. Too tired to pitch a tent, we made our beds, blankets spread over a layer of canvas, covered with the rubber groundcloth. With everything shipshape for the night, we thought of food. Until then we had not dared to. But men, like those of the opposite sex, detest the thought of work after a good meal. One rule adhered to strictly throughout the trip was that necessary work be done before attention was given to rest or pleasure. Perhaps that accounts for the lack of bickering and fault-finding on the trip.

This evening is daguerreotyped upon my memory. What a meal, this first of many glorious sandbar meals. What a night, this first of many perfect sandbar nights. Man may be a gregarious animal, but we welcomed the regenerative silence, solitude, separation from things mundane. This was Elysium.



---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

Allen set the table, placing an old white cloth on hard, smooth sand, and we sat around it, enjoying a bountiful banquet. There were no bugs, no flies, no mosquitoes, nothing to break the spell. The river lipp-lapped a symphony.



*Water, oranges and melons quenched our thirst.*

Allen insisted that I ought to have been a Roman emperor, so much did I enjoy the luxury of stretching out to eat, one arm supporting the head. I maintained that he ought to have lived in England, the Merrie Englands of food and frolic, when several beeves and huge dishes of fowl and fish were devoured at a meal. Never have I met anyone who enjoyed food so much, so long, so genuinely and so completely. It would not do to take him on a long journey where food was scarce or supplies far away. But in the starlight mystery glow of sandbar nights, it was joy to watch him eat.

That first sandbar night under the open sky was a revelation. We were alone, none near us, no noises to disturb us, nothing but the widespreading bar, the talking river with its voice pitched in a low key, the star-strewn heavens over us. The one disappointment was that sleep stole upon us so gently and took us so quickly to dreamless rest that we enjoyed too briefly the luxury of winking at the stars as we lay in the all-enveloping darkness trying to catch the message of the ever-whispering waters, the overtones of evening sandbar hours.

The morning broke foggy, filled with grey stuff that shut out the world. At six o'clock, with fifty-eight miles between us and Cairo, where there would be baths, clean linen and "bright lights," we left Devil's Island, hugging the Illinois shore, the last day it would be our companion. About seven we passed Cape Girardeau. A thin veil hung over the sleepy city. The Cape Girardeau District dates from 1793. This locality was

---

## NEW AMBITIONS OF RIVER BOYS

---

first called the "Big Bend," because of the tremendous sweep the Mississippi makes above the town. The name probably was derived from that of Ensign Sieur Girardot, who was stationed with the French troops at Kaskaskia. Don Louis Lorimier, a French-Canadian, made the first settlement, about 1790. The town was settled chiefly by Virginians, Carolinians and Kentuckians.

Sweeping around Gray's Point we saw the bridge at Thebes, where we pulled up at eight-thirty. While Allen entertained the youths of the village with tales of our adventures, real and imaginary, I telegraphed my brother that we would arrive at Cairo at five o'clock. Forty-five miles to go, with what kind of a day we had no idea, but we knew our capacities, even under adverse conditions.

We wondered why we were sore and stiff in spots, until we remembered we had slept on the sand the night before. It had not dawned upon us that sand could be hard. Rock, wood, those we knew were hard, but sand always had seemed soft.

Between Cape Girardeau and Commerce, Missouri, the river breaks through a spur of the Ozark Mountains, and reaches a point geologists claim was the ancient mouth of the Mississippi. They say that all land below here along the river is subsidence of the sea, formed by an upheaval of the bottom, and of soil washed down by the Missouri, Ohio and Upper Mississippi. Some declare that where Commerce now stands, a waterfall three hundred feet high emptied the Mississippi into the Gulf countless ages ago. Between Cape Girardeau and Cairo, the river seems trapped in a cul-de-sac, the bluffs crossing directly in the path of the stream.

Five miles past Thebes, we halted at Commerce for breakfast. I returned the following year to make sure that we had judged the town correctly. We had. Here we spent all of our cash, including our last two cents with which we purchased postal cards to send word home. We had traveler's cheques, but no coin: having been warned about "hard" river characters, we carried little money. A post was located here in 1803 or earlier.

Here we ate, returning to the craft at ten-thirty, with a crooked, crazy forty miles ahead of us. Here we found a crowd

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

of small boys. We were disappointed here as at several other towns where we discussed the river with youngsters. The movie and automobile have taken much romance out of the lives of river-front youths. Twenty years ago boys wanted to be pirates, cowboys, Indian fighters, steamboat pilots, captains, engineers or sailors. On our trip, the boys with whom we talked wanted to be bootleggers, bankers, hotel-keepers, and one, so he could get rich quick, he said, a senator, I asked one if he wanted to be a river man.

"For what?" he replied. "To run a ferry and meet yourself coming back all day long? Nosiree! I'm going to be a chauffeur, make money, own a car, and have swell girls hanging around me when I ain't driving!" He evidently had visited some large city.

Where is the romance of life, if in youth one wants to be only what he later becomes? The steamboat whistle around the bend still called them to the landing, but the throb of the engines aroused no throb in their hearts, smoke blackening the sky and then disappearing did not take their imaginations with it, the white teeth of the waters against the bow awakened no admiration for the boat. To most of them the river itself, winding and wending its majestic course, was just a stream. They did not ask, "Whence comes the river?" "Where goes the river."

Below Commerce we paddled along a giant letter "S," on which we canoed in every direction of the compass, for five miles heading north, with the wind always against us. On the fifty miles above Cairo, sandbars, caving banks, towheads and crooked channel were the worst thus far. For forty miles it seems as though the river is determined to go no place; on this August tenth it was unusually low and slow of current. We lunched in the canoe, drifting only a few hundred feet, but saving some time.

For years southern Illinois "gathered corn as the sand of the sea." People of central and northern parts, after the manner of the children of Israel, went "thither to buy and bring from thence that they might live and not die." Thus southern Illinois came to be called Egypt, and is so known today. The name is applied to Illinois south of the old Cumberland Road,

---

## MY NOSE PEELS AGAIN

---

now the right of way of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad from East St. Louis across the state. "Lower Egypt" or "Little Egypt" is the territory south of a line drawn from Grand Tower to Shawneetown. As in ancient days, Cairo is capital.

Tired, hot and worn, we reached the outskirts of Cairo. Slightly beyond was Bird's Point, once called Byrd Point, for Abraham Byrd, who located here under a New Madrid claim. Historians speak of a Fort St. Denis, erected at the mouth of the Ohio in 1702. In 1795 Gayoso de Lemos, Spanish governor of Louisiana, built a fort at Bird's Point.

We arrived at Twenty-Seventh Street at Cairo at five minutes past five. A phone call brought my brother, Horace W. Tousley, pell mell. We stored the canoe at a houseboat, piled everything into the auto and an hour later, shaved, bathed, freshly dressed, sunburned, ravenously hungry, were dining at the G. C. Rhodes home. We were at Cairo at last, "The Queen City of Southern Illinois."

If a change is a rest, for two days we rested in Cairo, interviewing businessmen, writing articles, overhauling the outfit, inspecting two high schools, the construction of which my brother was superintending, attending dinners, parties and picnics, driving over the countryside, and writing letters about southern cooking, watermelons, shortcakes and the beauties of the capital of "Little Egypt." For the tenth time of the trip my nose peeled. I wore dark glasses on the water, but the sun rays made sport of my poor proboscis. I tried everything, from new-skin to lubricating oil. Each signally failed to stop the pain, peeling and blistering, though a tooth paste relieved the soreness.

From earliest times, great as were commercial possibilities at this waterway junction, military advantages were considered superior. Early travelers spoke of it as an ideal site. Cairo was started by land companies on land once bog and swamp three times before it got under way. Now its levees withhold floods of fifty to fifty-five feet which pour out of the Ohio. Built on the Ohio River delta, Cairo was not always the clean, paved, diked city that we found. Timothy Flint, en route west to become a missionary in the late eighteenth century, said, "All we found of the ambitious city of Cairo was floating

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

on a great flatboat a hundred feet in length, in which were families, liquor, shops, drunken men and women, and all the miserable appendages of such a place." For two or three decades before the Civil War, Cairo was indeed a tough place. It drew the rougher element because of its location: river craft of all kinds stopped here. But the Civil War worked great changes, and the city has outgrown most of its youthful vices.


Cairo has awakened from the bad dreams of its early existence. We heard expressions such as these, whenever we talked with men active in the civic life of the city: "Cairo is the natural gateway of the continent": "All rivers drain to Cairo: it was the gateway a century ago and again will come into its own": "Congress has neglected to improve our rivers. When this economic crime is adjusted, watch Cairo grow."

Three times since 1882 engineers have raised the level of the levees surrounding Cairo. The waters of twenty-five states pass Cairo, down the Mississippi from Missouri, Kansas, Colorado, Nebraska, Wyoming, Iowa, Montana, South Dakota, North Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois and Indiana, and the Ohio tribute from Illinois, Ohio, New York, Indiana, Pennsylvania, Maryland, West Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia, Virginia, Alabama, Tennessee and Kentucky.

As in ancient Egypt, so today Cairo sees borne to the sea the floods and fortunes of the land, the rise and fall of rivers, the ceaseless flow of the waters toward the Gulf.

## CHAPTER XXI

*The Ohio Mouth; Kentucky, sixth state on the trip; Wickliffe, Columbus, Hickman; Tennessee, the seventh state; Island Number Ten.*

E WERE so spoiled by everybody at Cairo that it was difficult to leave. But after two days Allen had completely recovered from his typhoid inoculation and my nose had finished peeling. Seven o'clock August 13 found us once more on the river waving goodbye to my brother. A black squall which had been gathering in the west, headed for us. We still believed that a storm never crosses a river. We paddled straight into a driving, beating storm, which whipped the waves and hurled the rain into our faces. Half an hour later the sun was beaming lustily over the Kentucky hills, the world refreshed.

We had been warned against eddies and whirlpools at the mouth of the Ohio, but this was not flood season, when swift currents would bear us on without paddling, and make it difficult to keep the frail craft afloat. Here, at the Ohio mouth, fourteen hundred miles from the source, eleven hundred miles from the Gulf, we were at the gateway of the great commercial tributary of the Mississippi, where the blue waters of *La Belle Riviere* became part of the tawny flood.

Extending eastward a thousand miles to Pittsburgh was this river Ohio, the "Ohiopeekhanne" of the Delewarees, "a very deep and white stream." Here was the Ouabache of early travelers, the Baudrane of La Salle, Ohio of the Iriquois, Olighin-cipou of the Ouataouas, the last great artery entering from the east.

Down this river for three centuries have come Indians, *voyageurs*, explorers, missionaries, soldiers, troopers, settlers, all manner of men and women on flatboats, canoes, keelboats, pirogues, steamboats. *La Belle Riviere* has borne cargoes rang-

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

ing from food, feathers, tallow and skins to coal, lumber, steel and fabricated articles. But for the Ohio the Mississippi Valley might not have belonged to the United States. The earliest Americans came into the Old Northwest down the Ohio from New England, New York and Pennsylvania; on foot or horseback from Virginia and the Carolinas over Boone's Wilderness Road through Cumberland Gap or up the Great Lakes. Down the Ohio most of the pioneers who settled Kentucky, southern Indiana, Illinois, Kansas, Iowa and Nebraska, came in keelboats plied by boatmen who sang;

*Hi-O, away we go,  
Floating down the river  
On the O—Hi—O.*

Out of the Ohio Valley come the sudden floods which cause most of the danger to levees and revetments in the lower Mississippi Valley. Formed by the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers at Pittsburgh, it runs nine hundred and fifty-eight miles to Cairo, falling four hundred and twenty-four feet.

Development of the steamboat began late in the eighteenth century with Watt's steam engine experiments and discoveries of Fitch and Rumsey. Even the *Clermont*, Fulton's first successful steamboat, was little more than a hull containing a land engine, slightly adapted for marine use. The linking of Fulton with Chancellor Livingston and Nicholas J. Roosevelt, grand-uncle of the famous "Teddy," brought the steamboat to western rivers. Roosevelt in 1809, with his bride and a small crew, took a honeymoon cruise down the Ohio and Mississippi on a flatboat. He returned home to New York in January 1810 with such glowing reports that a company was formed and work begun at Pittsburgh on a steamboat to be run between New Orleans and Natchez. This was the *New Orleans*, first steamboat operated on western rivers, one hundred and sixteen feet long, twenty-foot beam, a sternwheeler riding deep, round bellied and painted sky blue. It started from Pittsburgh September 24, 1811.

Oldtime rivermen told us repeatedly that steamboats were finer than anything ashore, especially during the two decades preceding and following the Civil War. They came into use

---

### THIRD PHASE OF THE RIVER

---

with a verve that is typical of early America, a husky youth emerging from swaddling clothes, in a period when everything was splendid, when glamor glossed facts, and when even the conservative chroniclers loved flare and flamboyancy.

From the Ohio down we were on the third phase of the Mississippi, or Lower River, reaching one thousand and sixty miles from Cairo to Head of Passes, ninety miles below New Orleans. Below Cairo stream regulation is complicated by the danger of floods. The valley is wide, alluvial; bluffs far from the river, banks higher and composed of finer material which is more easily eroded. The river tends to shift its course far more than above Cairo. Bank protection is a serious problem, requiring expensive, elaborate equipment. The river contains much sediment: snags and floating drift come down on each rise, but floating ice ceases to be a menace.

Below the mouth of the Ohio the Mississippi is the most remarkable river in the world, with the greatest drainage area and most extended basin on earth. The Amazon has a larger discharge, yet nothing comparable to the number of miles of navigable tributaries in the Mississippi system. This river, the nation's highway, eccentric in flow, with a potential energy not yet fully known, drains a territory equalling the combined area of Germany, Austria, Holland, Portugal, Great Britain, Italy, Norway and Spain, an area of 1,256,000 square miles.

We paddled on and in the rain-washed early morning came to Wickliffe, Kentucky, where we breakfasted. A sign on the railroad station read "542 miles to New Orleans": by river it is nine hundred and sixty. The village was named after Robert C. Wickliffe, a native of Kentucky who emigrated to Louisiana, where from 1856 to 1860 he was governor.

We were in the sixth state on the journey, the "Blue Grass State," famous for feuds, old whiskey, fast horses and beautiful women. Allen wanted to look for a feud at once, but decided to eat instead. Kentucky comes from the Indian Kan-tuck-hee, "the dark and bloody ground." La Salle in 1669 was the first white man to enter this land, far up the Ohio. The early French made no effort to explore Kentucky or possess it except by proclamation. The first claim was by Virginia, held through the earliest colonial charters. Separation was granted in 1789



---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

and Kentucky was admitted as the fifteenth of the United States June 4, 1792.

Following breakfast and a saunter over rain-sprinkled, sunkissed Wickliffe, we returned to the canoe, where we found a crowd, youngsters and passengers from the *Three Cities*, the ferry running between Cairo, Wickliffe and Bird's Point. Those who had missed the Cairo papers could not help seeing Allen's Viking stature, and my red nose. After answering questions and refusing requests of youngsters to take them with us, we pushed off. Following a morning of steady paddling, we poked the nose of *The Charles H. Curley of St. Paul* into the bank at Columbus at noon, eighteen miles below Wickliffe. It was once called Iron Banks, the first legal white settlement in the territory west of the Tennessee River in Kentucky. We had passed two and were in the third of the four counties of Kentucky bordering the river. Ballard county, of which Wickliffe is county seat, was formed in 1842 and named for the famous Indian fighter, Major Bland Ballard who lived until 1853, dying when ninety-two years old. Carlisle county, below Wickliffe, was created from Ballard county in 1886, named for John G. Carlisle, Kentucky lawyer and secretary of the United States Treasury during President Cleveland's first term. Hickman county was named for Captain Paschal Hickman, resident of central Kentucky who was killed at the Battle of the River Raisin, January 22, 1813. Columbus was called "Iron Banks" from the low range of bluffs above the town.

During the Civil War the county was intensely southern. The remains of Fort Halleck are here. Here also, exposed by recent cave-ins of the bank, are the remains of an enormous chain which was forged during the war to prevent the passage of Federal gunboats. The river has eaten away much of the the waterfront of the old town, and for the first time we had the feeling of being behind levees. Residents told us that sand bags had been piled on top of the levee here to keep out the Ohio-swollen currents of the Father of Waters.

A number of persons had warned us about the "Columbus Whirl," considered the most dangerous eddy on the river, two miles below Columbus, an immense collection of little whirls with a larger one in the center. We were told its suction had



(1) This is not a Kentucky moonshiner, but Allen Sulerud, and the jug presented to the expedition by Captain Streckfus of St. Louis. This is not only an "exclusive," but a "characteristic" view of the subject.

(2) The author in his very worst clothes, not only "bringing home the bacon," but almost a storeful of groceries as well. Taken at Donaldsonville, after his nose had peeled for the twenty-first time.

(3) Harold and Carroll Davenport of Wickliffe, Kentucky, just below the mouth of the Ohio, decided to learn for themselves "Where Goes the River" and started off, with our canoe and outfit and their own freckles and bare feet, but their father caught the rope and their minds were changed.



(1) *The Bible warns against building on the sand. This houseboat, however, was merely left there by the last high water, and will be ready to float away to another home on the next spring rise. The picture illustrates how far the water rises some years.*

(2) *Island Number Ten, famous battleground of the Civil War. Where soldiers and sailors once fought, mules now graze, the famous Missouri mules, better known the world over than the battle.*

(3) *The Columbus Whirl, a whirlpool caused by the river striking the bluffs and turning away from them in anger.*

---

## A WHISKEY MISUNDERSTANDING

---

upset many skiffs and canoes and drowned their occupants. It is caused by a great bend in the river, which here is bound in by rock bluffs, coöping up the current instead of giving it a chance to spend its energy eating banks and making a wide channel. We thought we were past the whirl when we ran into the center of it. We fought hard, but for some minutes were twisted and turned about as the swirling currents wished, and then thrust out of the boiling waters to safety.

All afternoon we fought headwinds, against huge upriver waves, fifteen miles to Hickman, where we arrived at six o'clock after painfully slow progress. Our plan was to eat and paddle several miles downstream to a sandbar. But a storm was in the offing, and my ankle, which never was wrong, ached, foretelling a storm. So we stayed at a hotel and nearly suffocated, while the storm passed peacefully by. Our arrival at Hickman confirmed many stories we had heard of Kentucky. A gallon jug that Captain Streckfus had given us was empty. Wishing to refill it, we took it with us as we searched for the post office.

"Pardon me, sir," I asked an old man who was painfully pulling his way uphill. "Can you direct me to your post office?"

"What say?" He eyed our jug, cupped his ear and asked, "You say you want to buy whiskey?"

"No, thank you. We want to find your post office."

"Oh," he answered somewhat scornfully, "You'll find it somewheres about. Ain't been around much myself these last twenty years." And he ambled on up the hill.

We were told that Hickman was named for Reverend John Hickman, a Baptist preacher who came into the Kentucky country in 1776, the first in the state. But the Kentucky Historical Society gives the honor to Captain Paschal Hickman.

At five-forty next morning we were on the water, the Hickman bluffs shrouded in shadows, the city at rest, the streaks of morning beckoning us toward Island Number Ten, twenty-two miles downriver. The stream was particularly affable and we belabored it with alacrity, enjoying swinging the paddles in the cool, cats-paw breeze, our muscles thoroughly attuned after a rest and day of seasoning. Twenty miles below Hick-

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

man, we reached Tennessee, the seventh state touched by the river. Tennessee in Indian is "River of the Bend," so it is called the "Big Bend State." Here we found topsy-turvy geography. Below Slough Island Neck, Tennessee, where we passed a crew ripp-rapping the bank, Watson Point, Kentucky, greeted us, around which again lay Tennessee. The ridiculous bends in the river opposite Island Number Ten are only the first of a number of strange things which cause the maps to look wrong.

For seventy miles Kentucky had been on our left. Now for one hundred and ninety-two miles the Mississippi was to lave the shore of Tennessee. Increasingly the rabid river doubles upon itself, and serpentinely uncoils Gulfward. The first white man to traverse Tennessee was De Soto, who reached the Mississippi with his band in 1541. In 1794 the first territorial legislature of the Territory of Tennessee met, and June 1, 1796, it was admitted as the sixteenth state. In June 1861 it seceded and next to Virginia was the principal battleground of the Civil War.

The morning was eventful because we stole a watermelon. We could have bought one for ten cents, but preferred the joys of stolen fruits, and never enjoyed a watermelon more. The melon was purloined in Missouri, opposite Hickman county, the last in Kentucky on the river. Formed in 1845, it is named for Robert Fulton of steamboat fame. Hickman, once called Mill's Point, is county seat.

Shortly before noon we paddled past Island Number Ten where Pope's Union army, which had taken New Madrid, and Commodore Foote's fleet of ironclad gunboats and floating mortar batteries forced the Confederates to yield April 7, 1862, after a siege and several sharp skirmishes. All we saw on Island Number Ten were mules munching sleepily, and low willow trees.

An hour and one-half later we reached New Madrid. Poor old New Madrid! Setting, tumbledown, behind a levee and a sandpile, it appeared almost as though it had no former glories of which to dream. The one redeeming feature of the town was that here we bought for the first time in our lives, a watermelon for ten cents. The brothers Francois and Joseph Lesieur, employed by the St. Louis merchant Gabriel Cerre, in 1785

---

## THE NEW MADRID QUAKE

---

explored this vicinity for a suitable trading site. In 1786, they built a rude log hut, began trading and were so successful in dealing with the Delawares and others that more traders were attracted. It was called *L'anse a la Graisse*, or "The Cove of Fat," because of the fat profits made here.

The most exciting days in its history centered about December 16, 1811, January 26, 1812 and February 7, 1812, when the greatest earthquake this continent has known shook this part of the valley, focusing here. Shocks were felt at Boston, eleven hundred miles away. Lakes, ridges and domes were formed, cracks yawned, and great slides into the river caused hills to disappear. The entire surface of the countryside was altered. The current of the river was reversed for a time and a waterfall several feet high developed. Persons who wrote of the first shock say there was an awful noise, hoarse, vibrating sounds, cries of beasts, humans, fowls and birds, cracking of trees, roaring of the river.

The farthest north on the Mississippi that alligators are reported to have been seen was opposite New Madrid, by a writer in 1707. He says also that near Natchez huge saurians prowled about with quaint curiosity.

For many years New Madrid was called the toughest town on the Mississippi, but other places also have claimed that honor. It worried us not this afternoon. There was not enough energy in the sun-blistered place to have staged one good fight.

Sitting still watching the scenery day after day, to some might become tedious. But to us it was always new, ever changing, never a bore. The river did tire us, but we never tired of it. This day, with fifty-one miles to our credit, at seven o'clock we pulled the canoe up on Riddle's Point, Merriwether Bend, six miles from Reelfoot Lake.

Two nights before we had slept in Illinois: last night in Kentucky. This was our last in Missouri. We made our beds in the still-warm sand, scooping out enough to conform to the contours of our bodies. Though the day had been intensely hot, we slept under two blankets each. If there were any mosquitoes, a breeze rustled them away. We topped off our evening meal with half of our ten cent melon and settled into bed at nine o'clock. A passing boat attracted me and I got up

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

to watch this little world traversing the black highway. I returned to my blankets. The far-off engines had the rhythm of a lullaby. I slept, and, sleeping beneath the eternal stars, dreamed. We were pioneer explorers: Allen was Father Marquette and I was Joliet. We were guests of an Indian tribe. We had discovered the village through a little opening in the foliage of the banks, barely visible from mid-stream.

"How bright the sun shines when you come to see us, Oh Palefaces," the chieftain said. "Our lodges are open to you. I thank you, Black Gown, and you, Woodsman, for taking the pains to visit us. The world has never seemed so glorious, the sun so radiant. Never has the river been so calm and devoid of obstacles. Never has our tobacco tasted so well, nor our corn had so fine a flavor. Here, I give you my son, as proof of the friendship of my tribe."

I refused to accept the son, but took the other presents offered. But Allen, I remember clearly, wanted to take the little Indian as a mascot. A dinner was served. The chiefs fed us. The first course (it smelled so good in the dream air), served from a wooden dish, was sagamity or corn meal, boiled in grease and water and fed to us with a wooden spoon. Three fish were brought and one chief picked the bones out with his fingers. He blew on the hot, tender fishmeat, to cool it, and stuffed us with all he could make us eat. We appreciated it, of course, for that was hospitality. Next came that rarest treat of Indian dishes, a fine young dog, and the feast was completed with buffalo meat, of which we got the fattest parts.

Then we sat in the circle with the chiefs and braves, and smoked the pipe of peace. The head chieftain made a speech and presented us with the all-mysterious, powerful calumet, which we might carry and travel in safety for many leagues. Next Allen and myself harangued the assembled Indians lengthily and lustily, explaining our fullness of heart (not forgetting stomachs) over their kindness. We promised to return again if it were possible, and again launched the canoe.

I sat up in my blankets. Blackness enveloped us. The canoe, a few yards away, was safe. The waters of the river talked, but gave up no secrets. A few stars were in the heavens. In a few hours the river would be expecting us. And in a few minutes—quiet—peace—vagueness—sleep.

## CHAPTER XXII

*Caruthersville and a touch of fever; Arkansas,  
the eighth state of the trip; Chickasaw  
Bluffs; the record day; Memphis.*



WE HAD set the alarm for four-thirty, but the morning was so dark, so cold, and we were both so sleepy that we turned over on our sandbar beds and slept until the rays of the sun awakened us at five. For the second successive morning we took to the river at five-forty. Lake county, erected June 9, 1870, from Obion county, was still dusky hued. It is named for Reelfoot Lake, a nationally famous hunting and fishing spot in Tennessee.

In the first morning glow we paddled around Merriwether Bend, named for Richard Merriwether, who located here before 1825. We reached Caruthersville about mid-morning, the last town in Missouri on the river. We saw here the only bale of cotton that had reached town this season and the first we had ever seen. It was Saturday, "Nigger Day" in the south. On this day negroes come from the plantations or their little farms, laugh and loll, strut, stretch and stroll. Their rollicking laughter, melodious, lazy voices, and walks and shuffles are found in all towns of the south on "Nigger Day."

Beginning at Caruthersville is the West Side Delta, practically all in Arkansas and Louisiana, with a little in Missouri, extending along the west bank of the Mississippi. It equals the combined area of New Jersey, Massachusetts and Connecticut, more than thirteen million acres. Once only a hunting and fishing rendezvous, this region since the Mississippi River Commission has built levees has become a valuable farming section. In 1820 no levees had been built above the mouth of Red River. Today more than one thousand miles of levees protect the west side lands from the Missouri foothills to the Gulf. Behind these dikes south of the Ohio is an alluvial empire, one that only the Nile delta rivals in production and fertility. Since the first settlers poured into this valley, war on water



---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

has been waged until now at any time we might climb levees and look behind them to protected towns and farms.

In 1857 a town site was laid out and named in honor of the Honorable Samuel Caruthers. At Caruthersville we had to buy for the first time milk in a drug store instead of at a grocery store as we had always done in the north.

August 15 is memorable because we had "a touch of the heat," reached Arkansas, the "Bear State," eighth on the river, and took our first quinine to prevent malaria. Caruthersville and the heat held us until two o'clock. The official temperature was 104 degrees and the day before had been 102. At three-thirty we pulled up in the shade of a high mud bank on Island Number Sixteen, and slept for an hour, exhausted. We felt as though our food or water had been poisoned, or as though we had been pulled through keyholes. We learned this day that we would have to rest during the intense midday heat. While waiting, Allen recited:

*A little boy named Vaughan,  
Was sitting one day on the laughan.  
When a cyclone came by,  
Took him up in the sky,  
And no one knew where he had gaughan.*

To this bit of imbecility, I replied:

*A friar was stung by a hornet,  
And could only say "Gracious" and "Darnet."  
"What a pity," he mused,  
"That in youth I refused,  
When I heard a good cuss word to learn it."*

Allen promptly retorted:

*There was a young lady of sheen,  
Whose musical sense was not keen.  
You may think it odd,  
But she couldn't tell "God  
Save the Weazel,"  
From "Pop Goes the Queen."*

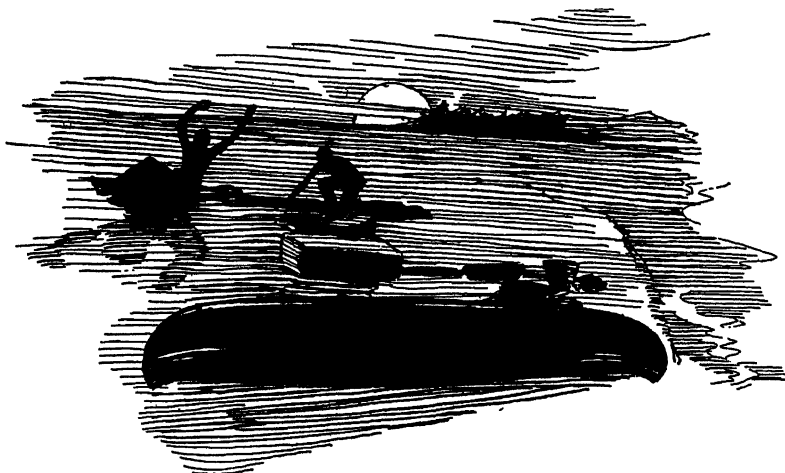
---

## MISSSED BY A FALLING TREE

---

Then each of us knew that the other had "a touch of the heat," and we were considerate of one another all of the rest of the day.

Taking to the canoe, we paddled until seven o'clock, passing the U. S. dredge *Henry Flad*, and the *Memphis* of the Federal Barge Line upstream bound. At dusk we left Missouri, which had been on our right for five hundred and twelve miles; we camped two miles downstream in Tennessee, opposite Miss Hickman's Towhead. But after dark we narrowly averted a sad end to the trip. We had been warned about cutting banks,



*" . . . and slept until the rays of the sun awakened us at five."*

the side of the river into which the waters rush and cut away land. We found a few places where the river was cutting on both sides. Distances are deceiving on the water, much more so at night. We thought we were safely away from the bank. There was a tearing, grinding, ripping, and a tremendous tree carrying tons of earth, rocks, smaller trees and brush, dropped into the river. Waves sprang in all directions; the canoe rose and fell, twisted and was sucked toward where the mass had disappeared. We clung to the sides of the craft and bent low, until the waves grew smaller. We were so close that the canoe and ourselves were strewn with dirt, twigs and even small rocks. Grabbing our paddles, we struck out for the black midstream.

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

Some distance below we landed on a sandbar, and camped in Tennessee, the fourth state in four nights, on the upper end of Needham's Cut-Off. It was made in 1821, and was the first large cut-off we met. A cut-off is a change in the river, made by the stream taking a short cut through land around which it formerly went in a loop. A cut-off does incalculable damage to owners whose land is swept away, and to those left inland when the stream deserts them. It is a menace to navigation, because it disarranges the regimen of the channel for miles up and down stream.

Some persons believe that a worn sock tied around the neck will cure all fevers. Others carry a rabbit's foot. We used quinine, taking our first dose this night, and continuing the operation every third night through the trip. Our mileage for the day was forty-four miles: not bad, but Memphis was still far away. The Mississippi borders Tennessee for one hundred and eight miles: it flows past Arkansas for three hundred and ninety miles.

The Territory of Arkansas was created by Congress March 2, 1819. By 1830 it had a population of 25,671 white persons and June 15, 1836, Arkansas was admitted as the twenty-fifth state.

The Arkansae, Arkansa, or, as they were better known, Quapaw tribes, were of Siouan stock, kindred to the Kansa, Omaha, Osage and Ponca. These four and the Quapaw were united, living in the lower Ohio valley. During the sixteenth century they migrated, four tribes traveling north, the Quapaws moving down the river. The Illinois called those who went north the O-ma-ha or "Upstream People" and the Quapaws the U-gakh-pa or "Downstream People," euphonically pronounced Arkansas.

We watched the channel lights flecking the black waters, and listened to the rhythm of night. While we waited for the ringing in our ears, which we had been told would come after taking quinine, we fell asleep. Then, as the movie sub-title says, "Came dawn."

What a morning! To open one eye, peep at the sky and see it silvered chastely, with the first opalescent beam above the eastern horizon, is inspiration enough to make the entire day

---

## INSPIRATION AT DAWN

---

a success. To throw off the covers, arise, run up and down the beach, *au naturel*, creating just enough wind to make the body glow. Then to breathe deeply, voluptuously, of daybreak air. The world is reborn. On such a morning one feels sorry for Adam and Eve, because they had no canoe in the Garden of Eden, with which to paddle out onto a silver sheet at daybreak and know the thrill of sending the subtle craft through silent waters. The river is in tune. Most men hate conversation before breakfast, until they have shaken off the spell of sleep. The river talks in the daytime, sings at sundown, whispers at night, but at dawn is silent, while we adjust ourselves to the new day.

There is a spiritual freedom, an exaltation, an exhilaration. Life flows more silently, deeper, not so swiftly, but sweeter. There is momentary meeting with the infinite never felt by those who lie abed until nine or ten o'clock. They who have not risen to walk a winding bypath shortly after dawn, or canoe over long stretches where mile after mile of river opens by magic as the sun bursts forth, cannot appreciate the beauty of life or its fullness. There is a glory of dawn on the river found no place else, a sincerity, a completeness of feeling, that never comes to those who sleepily look from their bedroom windows at dawn and draw the curtain more tightly. Sunrise in the city is insipid as a cup of tea that has been poured before a dance and has stood too many encores. Sunrise on the river is the red wine of life, nerve-soothing, mind-awakening, the soul-stirring liquor of being. During early morning hours there is no harsh thought; one smells the mysteries of the river, noses into the secrets of the stream.

August 16 found us on the water at five o'clock. None would have believed that on two successive days the thermometer had gone over 100 degrees and that we had been forced to rest several hours in the shade, and that on the nights following these days we had slept under two blankets apiece, these covered by canvas to keep out the dew. We rounded Needham's Cut-off and below Mouth of River Styx Landing, drifting in a breezeless expanse off Ruckers Point, breakfasted at seven-thirty.

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

This is a particularly desolate stretch of river. We paddled hard all morning, with lusty arms, driving the canoe along, rounding bend after bend, passing point after point, but saw no settlements. Ravages of high water have forced the levees back from the stream, driving towns and villages with them. We had intended to stop at Osceola, Arkansas, which the chart showed as large enough to have a restaurant. First settlers located here in 1812. Osceola was hidden behind a levee, an island and a towhead, and we were a mile downstream before we discovered it. We pulled up on Plum Point. We had thirty-five miles behind us: it was twelve-thirty. The sun was hot: we were hungry. We had our mouths all set for a cooling luncheon.

Sweet dreams! River madness! Fond illusions! There was a small ferry here, which conveys people across the stream, from where they walk a mile to Osceola. The man who ran it had a little commissary, and lived in the rear of the tent-store-house with wife and son. The youngster, about six, was drawing water from a well near the river's edge when we pulled up. He edged slowly away. We approached and took a drink. Terrible stuff! Below Cairo, except when we filled the jug where we knew the water was purified, we always obtained water by digging in a sandbar, some feet back from the river, and letting the water seep in. After bailing out the hole at least twice, we filled the bottle. Into this we dropped four drops of iodine, one drop to a quart. No chance of typhoid now. We came to like the iodine flavor, but could not stand chlorinated water.

"Can we get a meal near here," I asked the boy.

Shake of the head, meaning either "Yes" or "No."

"Where do you live?"

Another head shake.

"Any houses near here?" Allen tried.

Third shake.

"Do you live near here?" I asked.

Movement of the head repeated.

"Where are you going with that water?"

A terrified look; the boy dropped the pail and ran up the sandy hill. Amazed we followed the path to the top, where we saw a tent. Near it stood a man with a shot gun carelessly

---

## MISSISSIPPI RIVER 'CRACKERS'

---

resting across his arm. Under a tree a woman sat with a gun across her lap. We waved to them, approached, and were effusively greeted with a twitch of the man's eye.

"We're hungry," we explained. Silence! The only other object of life to be seen was a dog, which was listlessly hunting fleas. "And we wondered if we could get a good meal. Any place near here?" Eloquent silence. "We're canoeing down the river and (the man's ears assumed a new angle) preferred to buy a meal to cooking one."

He looked across the river toward Osceola, a faint flicker of an eye lash indicating what he was thinking.

"Osceola?" we asked.

An almost imperceptible nod.

"Too far. Have to paddle across and upriver and walk mile. Take too long."

Slight shrug of one shoulder. Evidences of thought. The dog assembled enough life to sniff at us.

"Nance, call that houn' away. How can I talk with these gen'lmen when I'm allays bein' int'rupted?" he asked succinctly.

Nance whistled one note. The dog loped over, settling at her feet. It was finally decided that we were to use their stove and dishes, select our goods from his stock, and pay him in addition to the food we bought, "a nickel for use of the dishes, a nickel for wood," and do our own cooking. Allen heated some canned corn; I fried potatoes. Allen crisped some aged crackers; I made coffee. Nance came over and watched us: Sam laid aside his gun, but kept it near. Jemmy, the son, peeked in through a hole in the tent. I asked if they always had lived here. They said no, they had traveled around "a good bit." Sam once had been to Nashville, and several times to New Madrid. Their home used to be "thurty mile" back in the woods, but Sam had to be on the river so the sun could keep him baked out. Nance, evidently, was a gay girl in her day. She was about thirty-five now and "gettin' awful set in her ways." She used to like "to gad about" and had been to Memphis several times. "Nowadays these women never will stay to home," but Sam said it was "her old man's fault, for he never learnt her to stay around the house," but that Nance was "purty well trained

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

now." The family was an excellent example of "red necks," "crackers," "sand hillers," or "hill billies," names by which the poor whites in the south are known. He asked how far we had come. I told him.

"All the way from those there Rocky Mountings, eh?"

"No, from northern Minnesota," I explained.

"Well, tain't so fur from there to the Rockies, I guess, from all I've heard."

He was only one of dozens who had no idea as to the source of the Mississippi. Some believed it began near New York. Others thought the Ohio was the upper Mississippi: some the Missouri. Some believed it had its origin in the mountains of Kentucky, in the Ozarks, "around about Chicago." One man said he would like to see the spring the river came out of at St. Paul. He thought it must be "right good sized."

After an hour of rest, two o'clock saw us on the water, paddling in the fierce afternoon sun down Plum Point Reach, at the foot of which was Chickasaw Bluff Number One, on which Fort Pillow was located. Commodore Davis took command of Fort Pillow June 4, 1862, when the Confederates abandoned it. On June 6, he descended the Mississippi forty miles to Memphis, where the northern fleet destroyed or captured all but one Southern vessel, and Union forces occupied Memphis.

Plum Point Reach is a sixty-mile stretch, one of the worst on the river for shoals and bars. The river has eaten both banks until in places they are three miles apart. Chickasaw Bluffs Number One, opposite Craighead Point, and Number Two beginning five miles below the first, are the first hills of consequence below Columbus. The bluffs are beautiful; not rivals of the upper river crags, but imposing promontories compared with the country through which we had passed. Chickasaw Bluff Number Two was especially striking with its variety of colored rocks.

As we rounded Morgan Point we were confronted by a wide island which divided the river into two channels of about equal width. As we swept past Richardson's Post Office, we asked a man which way to go. The steamboat channel was outside and safest. The land was Island Number Thirty-Five, reaching

---

## PYROTECHNICS OF THE SKY

---

seven miles downstream. He said we might go either way. We turned inside, hugging the Tennessee shore. It was late: we ought to have been seeking a campsite. We had had a good day, but wanted "just one more" mile. The one grew into nine before we felt earth again.

Never had we seen so glorious a sunset. We neglected our paddling to watch the pyrotechnics of a sun-abused sky. As the coloring assumed richer, deeper hues, Allen, out of his infallible memory, quoted, "Professor Maunder says, 'The color effects of an ordinary sunset are due to atmosphere through which the sunlight reflected to us from the clouds has passed before illuminating them'." But this was no ordinary sunset. How could we explain the harvest of colors? The romance of life has been stifled out of most persons. To the majority it is a bread and butter or cake and cream existence, their minds everlastingly on their bellies. Such a sight as this would have awakened in them fresh dreams, stirred old hopes and visions, renewed a belief in their right to happiness. In such hours as these we felt that all other rivers of the world were mere platitudes. One of the greatest joys of the journey was being so close to life, yet far from the world: in the midst of reality, but cut off from realities.

On our left the shore was spectacular in red, gorgeous in rounded colors. The chute was a red sheet, as red as the canoe it bore. Our bronzed bodies and faces were turned to Indian hue. On our right was the island, the trees a black fretwork against the red, red, sky. So brilliant was the sky, so lavish the water colorings, we could not follow the shorebound intricacies of the river, but we paddled on, awed by the light, spellbound by the beauty.

A deepening of color came, a sobering of tone: a darker shade intermingled indefinitely with the brilliant wine and scarlet that had just held the world. Then, as quickly as the stage is darkened, all grew black. Day, lingering overlong at the precipice, was catapulted rudely over the brink by jealous night.

We did not know where we were save in a chute headed for Cedar Point, Tennessee and Pecan Point, Arkansas. In silence we paddled on. Night was breathless: there was not a sound.



## *WHERE GOES THE RIVER*

---

Anything might happen on such a night on such a river, after such a display of glory. Only hazily could we make out the shores. The shadows thrust out by the banks were more deceiving than our imaginations. We had noted during the last afterglow just before the deluge of darkness, that cutting banks bordered both sides of this slough. We dared not get close. The black waters looked so powerful, our canoe so frail, ourselves so helpless.

There was a scraping on the canoe, a tearing, then we rippled on through the water. Lumps stuck in our throats; our mouths grew parched. No one who has never been out on a silent, strange river, can know the sickening feelings we experienced. We felt the bottom to see whether any water was coming in. None was. That was some relief!

"Careful of your paddle," warned Allen. The next stroke I hit bottom. We were in shallow water, traveling at break-neck speed: it seemed so much faster in the dark. I was glad we had no white horses aboard the canoe. Steamboats often had accidents when they carried white horses. Allen confessed later that he kept his feet and fingers crossed. Yet neither of us was superstitious. On we went, with the inevitability of the river. Our brains were at the ends of our paddles, telegraphing each move with amazing speed and receiving perfect co-ordination from our hands. We felt jumpy. The early morning start, long paddle, heat of the day, sunset, and this black chute, made us tense. Deadheads and sawyers leaped at us and fell away. We scraped logs, once tipping dangerously, shipped water, but slid over and on to new dangers. We hit one log head on, bobbed it down, passed over, and were nearly thrown out when it rose, striking the stern. After an interminable time, far downstream we spied a shore light, indicating that we were nearing the river. We went still faster. Running water sounded all around. We were passing over shallows. We scraped, grated, halted, hesitated, and then, as though the chute were glad to be rid of us, with a roar we were thrust out into the river.

Down the river we went, determined to find a wide, flat sandbar, where we could dig a hole for water, another for a bathtub. It had to be in Arkansas so that we might sleep in the fifth state in five nights. At eight-thirty we pulled up on

a bar on Dean Island, thoroughly tired, but we had made seventy-four miles, a record that stood throughout the trip. Memphis was twenty-six miles away: we would be there on the morrow. Our campsite was ideal, at the upper end of Centennial Cut-off, so named because it took place in 1876, a century after the Declaration of Independence.

The meal eaten, dishes out of the way, we crawled between the blankets. From far up the river came a faint, tuneful voice, borne on the night wind. After some minutes we saw lights, then the vague form of a Mississippi-Warrior Service self-propelled barge. It was running slowly, engines throbbing in subdued movement. Rolling out over the waters was the monotonous, musical voice of the lead-man, long-drawn, leisurely, but a voice upon which the safety of the barge depended.

“No-o-o bot-tom. N-o-o bot-tom.”

He was measuring the river depth with a rope at the end of which lead was attached: and with which he gauged the depth.

“Mark tw-a-inn. Mar-ruk twa-in,” came the voice, telling that the river here was two fathoms or twelve feet. The boat was crossing between two pools, over a sand bar.

“Tw-a-i-n-n. Tw-a-i-n-n,” the voice rolled out, with unchanged modulation, though there was only six feet of water. On went the barge, very slowly, creeping along. Lights flashed from the boat: a searchlight played over the water and distant bank. On it went, around a bend, growing farther away, then coming closer. As the vessel went onward, the tuneful call floated back on the evening breeze.

“No-o-o bot-tom. No-o-o-o bot-tom-m.”

Fainter, ever fainter, then into the night faded the last sounds, lulling us to peaceful dreams and sleep.

Five-thirty, August 17, found us back on the river, a much pleasanter, brighter stream than the one we had fled, one not yet hot enough to blister my poor nose or the paint on the canoe. As we moved along we twice had Tennessee on both sides of us, when Centennial Island and later Beef Island, cut off from the mainland by the vagaries of the river, were on our right.

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

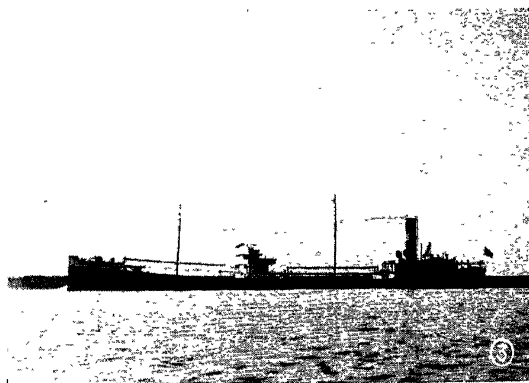
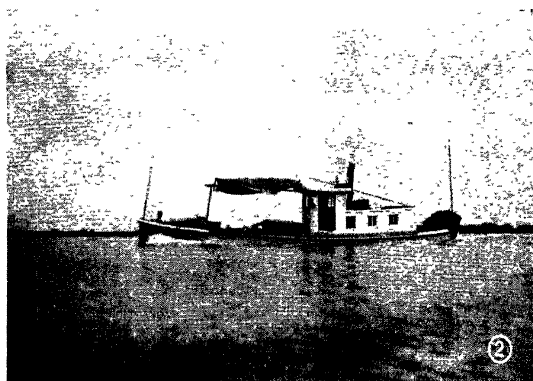
Nearing Memphis we rounded Hopefield Bend, which in recent years the river has greatly altered. Opposite the city was Hopefield Point, site of the Spanish Fort Esperanza, "hope," built by Governor Don Manuel Gayoso de Lemos in 1795. We were now in the St. Francis Basin, running from Memphis to Helena, Arkansas, containing six thousand square miles. The major bed of the river is forty miles wide, an overflow strip running from the Chickasaw Bluffs to Crowley's Ridge, Arkansas.

An hour before noon we swept out of the Mississippi into Wolf River. The current seemed always faster at the ends of sweeps that carried us to cities. We noticed this especially at St. Louis, Memphis, Vicksburg, and Natchez. Up Wolf River we paddled a short distance to the wharfboat of the *Kate Adams*, where a Mr. Dukes, a Confederate veteran, allowed this northern invasion to store its outfit. The expedition at once sought baths, shaves and clean linen.

At Memphis we strike the trail of De Soto, the most fascinating Spaniard to gain these shores, and, by consent of all who knew, the finest lance and best horseman who came to the New World, except for Goncalo de Pizarro, and, save at the mouth, the first white man to view the Mississippi. May 12, 1539, one thousand crossbowmen, artillerymen and mailclad knights left Havana to land later on the shores of Tampa Bay, Florida, fearless soldiers of that zealous Spaniard, Hernando De Soto, who bore a commission signed by Charles V of Spain. De Soto had seen service beginning in 1532, with Pizarro in his conquest of Peru. Now he was governor of Cuba and Florida, commissioned to conquer Florida and share its gold and riches.

For sheer courage, piety, daring and ability, De Soto stands second only to Cortez. The wanderings of months and miles, across Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, brought De Soto and his men on May 8, 1541, to Chickasaw Bluffs. There the fortune-flayed band beheld in silent wonder the yellow flood of the great stream.

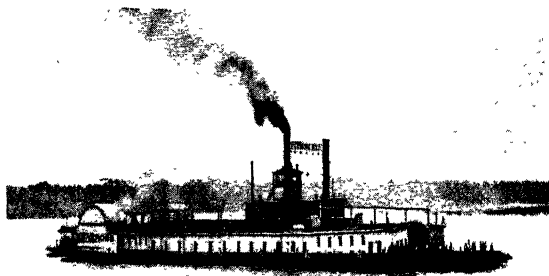
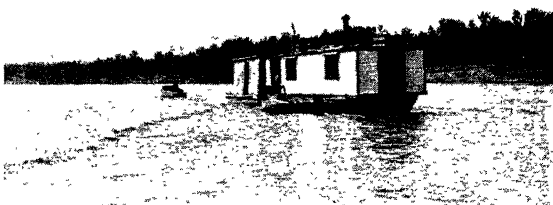
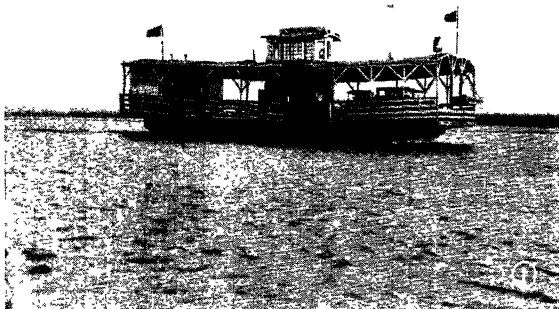
De Soto and his army labored a fortnight building barges to convey them across the river, which, diarists of the journey declare, was half a league wide. One says it was so wide that



(1) The church boat or evangelistic boat, Maranatha, in Plaquemine Bayou at Plaquemine. Its signs bespeak its purpose.

(2) A little oyster lugger, the Elk, heading upstream off Pointe a la Hache.

(3) The Caddo, loaded with oil received from the Standard Oil Dock at Baton Rouge, headed downstream, salt-water bound.



(1) *The Desha H. Kimball, the ferry running across the river at Arkansas City, Arkansas, propelled by its own machinery.*

(2) *The houseboat The Charles H. Curley of St. Paul raced around Yellow Band, below Arkansas City.*

(3) *The Albatross, the car transfer for the Vicksburg Route, off Delta Point, Louisiana, which nearly sank the canoeists.*

---

## THE TRAIL OF DE SOTO

---

a man standing on the other side could not be discovered. They tell of a violent current, deeply flowing, muddy, swirling, with trees and stumps in it, as we see today in high water.

At Chickasaw Bluffs La Salle's party camped and built Fort Prudhomme. Upon the return journey La Salle was stricken with fever, and, under the leadership of Tonty, the expedition pressed onward, leaving the Prince of Pioneers to follow later with a small detachment. At Chickasaw Bluffs, Bienville in 1736 built a fort near the site of Fort Prudhomme and named it Fort Assumption. The Wolf River was then called the Margot, and the nearby country Encores a Margot. The locality was a seat of piracy during the close of the English period. At the mouth of Wolf River July 20, 1797, Captain Izaac Guion took possession of the Spanish fort, unfurled the first American flag to fly along the Mississippi, and built the first American fort on the river. It was completed October 26, 1797, named Fort Adams for John Adams.

Memphis, "Queen City of the Valley," metropolis of Tennessee, one of the great cities on the river, is in Shelby county, which was created November 24, 1819, from Hardin county, and named for Izaac Shelby, an early governor of Tennessee. "The Bluff City" surrendered to Union forces June 6, 1862.

Our plans at Memphis were upset by my reactions to the second typhoid inoculation of the three we had to take. Allen suffered from the first one: now it was my turn. The afternoon of the day we arrived, we received the second "shot." By six o'clock I was unable to eat: by midnight I was delirious. Allen not only had to take care of me, but, so he said, he had to listen to an hour oration on how to beat the five-man defense in basketball. All the next day I was ill, and part of the second night, but the following morning, after a cold shower and with Allen's moral support, we saw Memphis, learned its history and heard of its future prospects. Here, in their natural *habitat*, we heard sung the "Beale Street Blues," "Memphis Blues" and a dozen other "blues."

The last two bridges on the Mississippi are here, leaving the last eight hundred and fifty miles, one-third of the river, unspanned. Memphis is the greatest inland cotton market in

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

the world, handling about one million bales a year. When we visited Memphis in mid-August, the whole city was talking cotton. Cotton! We heard the word on every lip. We understood for the first time what it means to arise "cotton-mouthed" in the morning. A few bales already were in. The army worm or leaf worm had not been bad: the boll weevil had behaved fairly well: the season was about a fortnight early. It made us happy just to talk with the people. What a relief after listening to tales of woe about wheat and potatoes, corn and hogs.

But!—"It isn't the heat: it's the humidity."

By the time we reached Memphis, we had determined to buy guns and shoot on sight anyone who dared mention these words within our hearing. We had heard them a thousand times, addressed to us or to other unfortunates. Humidity as used by citizens of lower river towns is not an explanation, but an excuse, an apology. Saying "It isn't the heat; it's the humidity" that causes discomfort is like explaining a child by remarking "It isn't her temper that makes her misbehave: it's her disposition." The main thing is that the child misbehaves. So did the weather. The day we reached Memphis the thermometer topped 100 degrees and varied only a few degrees during our stay. Instead of accepting the heat and keeping quiet, here and everywhere else they made the air still hotter by huge quantities of additional hot air in the form of that sentence, repeated constantly, "It isn't the heat: it's the humidity."

But Memphis, we loved it just the same! Heat! Typhoid inoculations, which were not her fault! Slow of movement, but most hospitable. Here for the first time we saw negroes in large numbers, with their odd, shuffling, limping gaits, caused by tight shoes. Most of them have gashed the shoes at the toes, and out of them protrude parts of their swollen feet. We walked the streets by day and night, but always we returned to the levee. There we saw boats and the river, by day, at night, with lights aglow, and heard sounds and songs. There we saw roustabouts on the boats, and stevedores loading or unloading. We caught snatches of many songs. One bit of "blues" we heard, sung always by mellow-voiced laborers was:

---

## WE REACH THE SOUTHLAND

---

*De night is dark, de day is long  
An' we are far fum home;  
Weep, my brudders, weep!*

Then, with much gusto and greater efforts on both song and work:

*De night is past, de long day done,  
An we are goin' home.  
Shout, my brudders, shout!*

We halted in our stroll to wipe the beads of perspiration that popped out onto our foreheads. Allen turned to me and said,

"We're South, Pudge! We're South!"

"Yes," I replied, absent mindedly, as I looked out across the sloping levee, past the boats, to the tawny river, flowing toward the sea. "And if we could just get to Vicksburg, it would really seem as though we were beginning to get somewhere!"



## CHAPTER XXIII

*Forced ashore on President's Island; Sandstorms; Mississippi, the ninth state; Helena; We are wind-bound for the first time.*

**L**ET'S get out of here," I demanded savagely, after four days in Memphis, during which time the thermometer hugged 100 degrees, while the sun glared with pitiless, penetrating heat, and we suffered as do pent-up animals longing for woods and fields.

"Agreed," returned Allen. Half an hour later we were tossing the outfit into the canoe. The city seemed to be growing hotter. An oppressiveness hung over the river: it reeled drunkenly in the intense heat of the afternoon sun. We hurried uptown to buy our groceries and pushed off into Wolf River after thanking Mr. Dukes, custodian of our outfit, who shook his head sadly as he waved goodbye. We wanted a cool sandbar, where we would get what breeze there was, where there would be freedom from blistering pavements and buildings burning all night with the heat of weeks of suns.

Under the last two bridges on the river we paddled. We left the levee at Memphis at six o'clock. An hour and one-half later we were six miles downstream. The sky suddenly grew black: a sinister evanescent hue possessed the heavens. We were in mid-stream. Without a word, we paddled for a sandbar for all we were worth. A hush hung over the river. As we gained the shore of President's Island, we heard the roaring of wind, the rain sweeping over the waters. We emptied the canoe, piled the outfit on a high place, dug a trench, turned the canoe over the duffle and climbed under. Just in time! As we pulled in the last few things, the storm struck, a gale so furious that it would have taken the canoe and outfit had we not clung to the craft. First came howling wind and sand. We understood why parties of Arabs on the deserts are found beaten to earth. We were in the most exposed position possible, with the wind sweeping unhampered across a sand stretch several miles wide.

---

## THE CANOE FOR A BLANKET

---

Our quarters under the canoe amidst the duffle were cramped. The sand filtered through everything. We covered our faces with sweaters and kept it out of our eyes, but out of nothing else. After fifteen minutes came a sharp spatter of rain, then the deluge. We could not see the water's edge, ten yards away. The trench carried the water off. All that seeped in was what splashed or was blown under. Some things got wet, but we were dry, cramped and most uncomfortable. At first the air under the canoe was stifling, but, as the rain fell the atmosphere cleared. It became so pleasant and cool that we forgot care and trouble, sandstorms, rain, discomfort, and fell asleep. How much later I awakened, we do not know. We could find neither watch nor clock. I was desperately uncomfortable. The canoe was across my chest, rising and falling on a gentle swell as I breathed. Examination revealed Allen's long legs protruding from the other side of the canoe. He had shifted the craft in his sleep, to find room for his pedal extremities. Though it was still raining, we readjusted ourselves and once more drifted off in sleep.

On the upper river we said "Away at Daybreak." Now it was "On the Water Before Dawn." By five-thirty August 21 we again were afloat. The wind blew downstream for one of the five days on the trip. It was so fitful that it made guiding the canoe difficult, though at times it aided our progress. We were on the longest and hardest jump of the journey, from Memphis to Vicksburg, three hundred and seventy-five miles. We made it in eight days, averaging forty-seven miles a day, bucking headwinds all of the way.

Rounding Cow Island Bend about eight-thirty, we had a bit of food as we drifted into sight of Mississippi, the ninth state touched on the voyage. On our left was De Soto, first of eleven counties in Mississippi bordering the river, established February 9, 1836, one of twelve formed from land secured from the Chickasaws by the Treaty of Pontotoc, October 20, 1832. Chickasaw comes from "Chickasha," "rebellion," and refers to their separation from the Creeks and Choctaws.

De Soto was the first white man to set foot in this state. After him came Joliet's party, then La Salle. The first colony planted in what is now Mississippi was at Biloxi, by Iberville

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

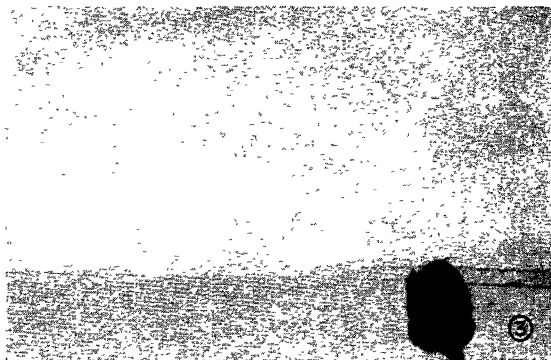
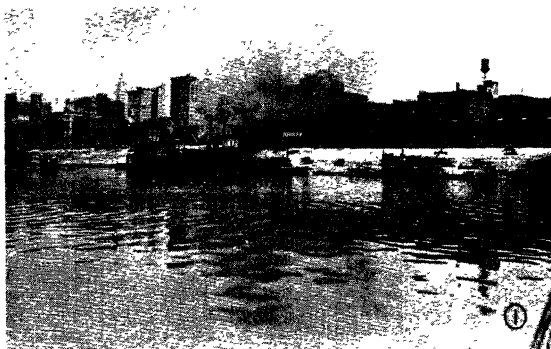
---

in 1699. Congress created the Mississippi Territory April 7, 1798. Mississippi was admitted as a state December 10, 1817. Natchez was capital of the territory, but about 1823 the capital was moved to Jackson. The second state to pass the Ordinance of Secession was Mississippi, January 9, 1861, but in 1869 "The Magnolia State" was readmitted to the Union.

We frequently had remarked that one advantage of water travel was freedom from dust and dirt. But this morning the river was dusty from the sand blown across the waters. At times we could see nothing but great clouds of whirling sand. We lunched on a sandbar above Peters Towhead, forty miles below Memphis. A sandbar is the finest apartment house in the world, but we educed that in windy weather it is the worst dining room. Our meal consisted of equal parts food and sand. Our outfit, packed into the canoe in those cold moments before dawn, was in fair condition except that blankets and some clothes were wet. Tom Sawyer said his balloon was as easy to manage as a canoe: he had never paddled the lower river in a windstorm. It gave us no chance to dry a thing all morning: we paddled with the "hatches battened" to avoid having everything blown into the stream. Our sandbar was so level it looked as though it had been landscaped. Before we had finished spreading out the last of the outfit, the first things we had laid down were dry, so hot was the sun. It required only fifteen minutes to unpack, dry and stow away the outfit.

We lolled on the sandbar until two o'clock, attired as savages, and added several coats of tan, then paddled a mile downstream to Lady Lee Landing, Arkansas. I spent a futile hour tearing through the brush, from one deserted house to another, trying to find a place where someone lived. We refused, in spite of the vigor with which our inoculations had taken, to drink water from abandoned wells. Returning to the canoe, tired, hot, thirstier than ever, I found Allen reclining happily, reading a magazine. After the explosion, we drank river water, thoroughly iodined.

The alluvial valley of the Mississippi River lies in six great basins: the St. Francis Basin, 6,706 square miles; Yazoo, 6,648; White River, 959; Tensas, 5,370; Atchafalaya, 8,109, and Pontchartrain, 2,001. The Yazoo-Mississippi Delta heads



(1) Here the Wolf River enters the Mississippi. A view of the waterfront and levee of Memphis.

(2) The purported site of the discovery of the Mississippi River by Hernando de Soto, the Chickasaw Bluffs at Memphis. The main body of the river goes to the right of Presidents Island, the largest in the Mississippi, part of which is shown here.

(3) This picture is not light struck or out of focus. It shows a sandstorm on the Mississippi River off the lower end of Cow Island Bend. At times the shore was entirely obscured.



(1) The author writing in his diary on Willow Point.



(2) There is no foot rail at the bar on Cat Island Bend. Drinking milk from the faithful thermos bottle.



(3) Allen Sulerud and the author, aboard U. S. S. Yocona at Vicksburg.

---

## THE DUSTY OLD STREAM

---

a few miles south of Memphis and ends at Vicksburg, lying wholly within Mississippi. Between the Mississippi and Yazoo rivers an area of 7,000 square miles is subject to overflow, fertile as any land in the world, composed of the rich, black, alluvial deposits of ages. This river of bending, obsequious willows, clayey banks, cracked by baking sun, canebrakes and cottonwoods, is a contrast with the upper stretches where boxelders, maples, pines and oaks grow beside the banks, which change little from year to year.

All afternoon the wind hurled clouds of sand into our eyes, covering us with fine powder, until we were oriental in cast. At times the clouds were so dense we could not see one another; often land and water were completely blotted out. The wind threw vast quantities of sand into the air, chasing it from Arkansas to Mississippi and back, changing the shapes of sandbars, making weird figures in the air. Time after time the wind swept sand across the surface, leaving a cover, dust as fine as that from a sack of flour. All of the countryside seemed to be shifting its position. We were impressed with the changelessness of this ever-changing river. We learned facts about life from it, but not life spelled in capital letters with dashes between and mentioned in hushed, awed voices by romantic young women.

Just before seven we pulled up on Hardin Point, Arkansas, with fifty-one miles covered. The sun set in a variegated refulgence, all the colors of the rainbow hysterical with the southern August heat. While we ate, the stars came out. The meal completed, dishes washed, the world at rest, we settled into the warm sand. We were grateful for the unpopulated river, where there were no crowds to annoy us, to disturb our meditations. The afterglow faded: millions of little yellow bugs crept into the sky, blinking at the world below.

The day after we left Memphis the thermometer reached 108 degrees, according to the Weather Bureau of the Department of Agriculture. On August 22, when we visited Helena, it was 93 degrees. For days it was above ninety. Out on the river, with the merciless sun beating a constant tattoo upon us, unprotected, unsheltered, we received also the reflected light from the water. We burned so black we were advised not

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

to wear headgear at night, so that our light hair would prove we were not negroid.

Next morning we were on the water by five-thirty. As we rounded Shoo Fly Bar, six miles downstream, the great planet peeped over the levees and chased the chill from the air. It was a twinkling morning, a twinkling river. All the world was twinkling; paddles twinkled as they flashed back and forth. Our moods and conversation twinkled. We had never before quite realized how voluptuous the sunrise hours could be. It was the sort of morning when one paddled along, in harmony with everything, yet fearful lest something break the spell. So acutely beautiful was it that I wondered whether it was a figment of the mind. Only the oil boat *Standard*, passing upstream, leaving great foam splotches on the smooth surface, made us realize that there was reality.

On our left was Tunica county, established February 9, 1836, and named for the Tunica tribe, "The People." On our right was Lee county, created in 1873 and named for Robert E. Lee. In this county in the forties was the stronghold of John A. Murrell, buccaneer, freebooter, considered by some America's greatest bandit. From his wilderness rendezvous along the river, the "Great Land Pirate" sallied forth to rob, then escape into these lands. He lived in a time when steamboats were beginning to replace keelboats, and died ignominiously in prison in 1847. His death marked the close of an era. He was the last of the great river pirates, one of the last half-alligator-and-half-man keelboatmen.

Three hours of paddling brought us to the mouth of the St. Francis River, which at this time of the year adds little to the Mississippi. Below Prairie Point Towhead, setting comfortably behind the levee was Helena, Arkansas, two hours below the St. Francis River mouth. Just before reaching the town we passed the train ferry *W. B. Duncan*. Here in 1800 William Patterson cleared away the canebrakes which stood in profusion along the shore, and erected a warehouse to store goods brought by keelboats and barges. Helena, at the foot of a range of protecting hills called Crowley's Ridge, is built upon the only high ground west of the river between the southern border of Missouri and New Orleans. As we made

---

## WHITE MULE AND "THE LAW"

---

our canoe fast, we heard a negro, fishing on the bank, and singing,

*Blisters on yo' feet,  
An' co'ns on yo' han';  
What yo' get fo' wo' kin'  
Fo' de black-haired man.*

He stopped, stared quizzically and asked, "Howdy boss, come yo' from afah?" and went on singing without waiting for a reply. Helena was a lively place as it was "nigger day." The latest United States census reported eleven million negroes in this country. It seemed as though all of them had come to Helena to buy groceries. We bought supplies too. When we ordered milk, we were asked whether we wished for "sweet milk." We thought the clerk was making fun of us.

"Think we want to make sour milk pancakes?" I countered.

"I meant," the clerk replied, "would you prefer sweet milk, butter milk or canned milk?" He explained that the heat made it difficult to keep milk and that much canned milk was used. Below here we purchased milk in drug stores or meat markets and bread and cakes in bakeries.

Negroes are fish eaters as well as chicken lovers, and several fish markets thrive at Helena. We were told that several trainloads of river fish are shipped daily from points along the Mississippi for New York, where the Catholic, foreign and negro populations use them. One dealer said that were it not for southern European Catholics, who, because of fast days eat more fish than Protestants, the lower river fishing industry would be relatively unimportant.

We aroused considerable interest as we walked along the streets of Helena with our watermelon, groceries and jug of water.

"Hi there, boys, got white mule?" several called to us.

We shook our heads "yes." Had we said "no," none would have believed us anyway. Just as we started up the ramp or road which led over the levee, someone shouted, "Hi there, boys. Wait a minute."

A lumbering, powerfully built man came up, obviously, though he had no star visible, an "officer of the law."



---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

"Whatta y'all got in that there jug?" he asked, seeming more interested in a drink of "white mule" than in making an arrest.

"Now what do you suppose we'd be carrying around so carefully?" Allen bantered.

"Well, I do'no, but I reckon I'd oughtta sample it to see that you boys don't get too much, or wrong stuff," he returned.

I handed him the jug. He tipped it over his shoulder with a practiced air, and took several big swallows. He made a wry face, blew out a mouthful and ejaculated, "Bah! Water! How can you touch the rotten stuff?" Never, even on the stage, had we seen a greater distaste for Adam's Ale evinced. But he helped to carry the groceries to the canoe, refusing to touch the "fool jug" again, and waved a friendly farewell as we left at half after twelve.

Starting down Helena Reach, we passed, upstream bound, the *Wabash* with a lumber barge. The *Iowa* with barges passed down the river. An hour below Helena we pulled up on a sandbank and rested for two hours. The heat made it impossible to stay on the river without losing all of the joy of life. Part of the time we gazed at the skies, and told what we saw in the clouds. By three o'clock, having regained our pep, we started around Montezuma Bend, avidly wielding the paddles.

The night was spent on a sandbar below Old Town Bend, named, we imagined, for the make of our canoe. We camped about seven o'clock, far from vegetation and mosquitoes. The only mosquito we met on any sandbar camp was such a rare individual that we did not have it in our hearts to kill it. We made forty-six miles for the day.

We were on the water at five minutes to five. By nine o'clock Jackson Point and fifteen miles were behind us. Sunflower Bend was far ahead. Long before we reached it the wind, which had been freshening since dawn, was lashing at our canoe. All morning we fought against it. No matter where we headed, the wind was against us, blowing a gale, first on one side, then the other; now in strong, long, blows, then in fitful gusts. Several times the canvas cover, which we packed down tightly and today weighted with rocks, was blown loose, and the canoe almost upset by the sudden balloon of wind

---

## A BITTER BATTLE WITH WIND

---

which surged under it. All morning our red craft rose and fell on the waves like the blushes of the heroine of a novel of the late last century.

We pulled up on Island Number Sixty-Seven, about noon. Here on a high shelf created by flood waters, we enjoyed our noonday meal. We had a good record for the morning, thirty miles, and expected easily to make fifty for the day. While resting we unloosed to the noon air our opinions regarding wind, waves and the river in general. We enjoyed having the waves talk to us, but this day the river was too verbose, too prolix.

After a good rest we started around Island Number Sixty-Seven. It seemed as though the wind and waves had died and as though we had a pleasant five-hour paddle ahead. As we rounded the point, we hugged the inside. From somewhere came a puff of wind that blew us out onto the river before we could prevent it. Once out of the shelter of the low sandbar bank, we found that the wind had increased in strength and fitfulness. The waves of the morning were small compared with this welter. For ten minutes we battled to regain the left bank, but made no headway. The combers came down upon us as though determined to crush the craft, and end this journey with only seven hundred miles left. Irascible waves, running upstream made it seem as though the river was suffering from nostalgia and the waters striving to return to their sources. The sensible thing to have done was to have turned tail and run, but the glory of an adventure is not always in doing the sensible thing. And when we might have wished to do so, the waves piled too high, the wind blew too sharply to permit turning. Allen quoted Sheridan, "My valor is certainly going! I feel it oozing out, as it were, at the palms of my hands!"

After that neither occupant of the ricocheting craft had time to think of valor or virtue. All that we could do was to hold *The Charles H. Curley of St. Paul* straight into the wind, and, bit by bit, laboriously quarter toward the west bank. We reveled in the fight with the elements. We were powerful machines, automatons, tireless, fearless, eternal. We could labor and combat this river, laugh at it, defy this tawny monster

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

shaking its mane at us, that seemed bent on destroying us, devouring us.

We felt contempt for persons who cruised this river in machine-propelled vessels, in rowboats or launches and considered it a sporting proposition. Who could not traverse the Mississippi with the aid of an engine? Anybody might sit in a safe skiff, with gasoline and mechanics doing the work. We did not want such aid. The old or feeble might travel in launches, steamboats or rowboats with outboard motors, but none who loved these waters, who enjoyed combat with the elements, who dared to oppose this untamed stream, would use a gasoline engine and believe it an accomplishment to traverse the river. As we battled wave upon wave, with every seventh or eighth larger than the others, the canoe slowly advancing downstream and toward the Arkansas shore, it seemed that Sherman's March to the Sea was unimportant compared with our paddle to the Gulf.

The gale freshened, churning up more than ever the mad, muddy, murky stream. We fought on: an hour later finding ourselves half-way across. The waves rose so high that we could see nothing but water. Sometimes we backed water as we slid down a comber, to keep from descending too fast. Again we plunged into a wave with our bodies bent forward, to keep as much water as possible out of the canoe. We wished for nothing so much as the feeling of firm ground, solid ground. As we battled the prodigious waves, I had a maddening desire to play handball, cribbage, horseshoe, anything but what had to be done. Allen apostrophized wind and wave, hurling opprobrious appellations at the recreant river, heaping calumny upon "Dame Nature."

We are all beset by doubts, but while this battle went on, we did not have time for doubt of any kind. I have, however, faint recollections of attending my own funeral, and seeing a monument erected in memory of a lost body. I never came so close to experiencing a spiritual earthquake in my life. We perspired enough to raise the river. Some biologist has said there are more than two million pores in the body. Every one of ours was working overtime. We were immersed in saline streams: not trickles or rivulets, but torrents, Niagaras of

---

## WE ARE CONSIDERED "HANTS"

---

perspiration. To most persons even the Mississippi is only another waterway. To me, it is a personality, a living force, a great physical and spiritual power. The tremendous thing nearly swallowed us this day. By bailing, by paddling more desperately for a longer time than on any other instance on the trip, by fighting harder than we had dreamed possible, we remained afloat, and finally won the shore. A month before we could not have stood the strain. Now we could paddle hour after hour, like clocks counting the minutes of life.

Wet, bedraggled, tired enough to have effected any sort of compromise with the river, we gained shelter on the Arkansas shore in a nook called Knowlton Post Office. On this stretch, bank protections had been built, and a negro crew was at work on another project. The white foreman and several others came down to greet us. The negroes lined up curiously along the top of the levee.

"Well, fellows, we sure didn't think you'd ever make it," said the foreman. "We were going to put out in the launch to get you, but we didn't think she could live through those seas, so we stayed here. You must have some canoe there."

We assured them of our appreciation. It had taken more than two hours to come half a mile across the river and half a mile downstream. We were not exhausted, but certainly were tired, more so, we found after tying up, than we had realized. As we stepped from the canoe, the negroes on the levee showed signs of fright. We went toward the nearest group, intending to ask them to fill our water jug.

"Pah-leeze, don' y'all tech me, sah," one apologetically, fearfully, protested. "Yore hants, an' I don' wan' y'all givin' them there hants to me, sah. No SAH! Pah-leeze!"

He turned and fled. Two minutes later not a negro was within a stone's throw. The white men explained that the negroes did not believe human beings could live through such water as that from which we had just come, therefore we were "hants" or ghosts. They might know we were alive, but they would not believe it, and they were taking no chances of us giving them "the evil eye" or casting "the spell" over them.

In eighteen hundred miles this was the first time that we had been windbound. We were held up two hours after reaching

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

Knowlton Post Office. The afternoon was almost a total loss so far as distance was concerned. Shortly after six o'clock, with the river more tractable, the wind having dropped with the sun, we left Knowlton Post Office, and paddled five miles. After seven o'clock, with only forty miles for the day, we found a wide, flat, sandbar on which to rest our much wearied heads and bodies, on Island Number Sixty-Nine, two miles above Hurricane Point, seventy miles below Helena.

In the big bend in the river opposite the island, a gang of cut-throats which formerly infested this portion of the river made their rendezvous. From here they fared forth to rob vessels. One man finally determined to run the river in safety. He gathered a brave crew, armed them more than "to the teeth." The pirates saw the boat coming. When it was opposite the island they sallied out. They could see only the helmsman on the keelboat. As the gang came aboard, the crew stood forth. The entire gang was wiped out. If we stirred restlessly in our sleep the night of August 23, it was because of dreams of our experiences of the day, or, mayhap, because the spirits of these departed bandits called upon us to join them in their ghostly revels, to tip the cup and quaff the contents, and send forth upon the waters, the merry songs and wild refrains loosed to the winds in the long gone days.



*The author shaving while the craft was windbound at Knowlton Post Office.*

## CHAPTER XXIV

### *The mouths of the White and the Arkansas rivers; Arkansas City; The Bends; We race a houseboat.*

**A**FTER every hard tussle with the river, we returned to it with greater love. We had conquered it, or had escaped being conquered. We had seen it again in high dudgeon, knew more of its propensities, but it elicited not even a clandestine confession that we wished the journey successfully terminated. Strictures might be hurled, billingsgate heaped upon it, deprecatory remarks addressed to the recreant river, but not once was there the faintest desire to submit to our wastrel opponent. Its awful power, its mighty charms we knew.

Opposite Montgomery Cut-Off, one mouth of White River in high water, four miles above its legitimate debouche, we ate as we slowly drifted along about eight o'clock. We had not made "twenty miles to breakfast," but we had done fifteen. Before ten, fifteen miles above the mouth of the Arkansas, we passed the place where the White River enters the Father of Waters. Had we not been close to the Arkansas shore, and watching for it, we should have missed the opening. In August it contributes little to the parent stream.

Six miles below the White River mouth, we pulled up alongside a Mississippi River Commission quarterboat at Rosedale Landing. Rosedale, Mississippi, sets back a mile from the river, and as we were short of food, we tried to buy supplies from the quarterboat.

"We're not allowed to sell government supplies," he said.

"But we're all out of bread," we protested, naming several things it now seemed we must have.

"I'm very sorry, but we'd be liable to fine and prison if we sold supplies without an order from the heads, even though you were starving," he explained.

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

We sat on the quarterboat and looked pensively across the waters. Several minutes of silence followed. In the heat of late morning, thinking was an effort.

"You fellows are taking the sort of a trip I've always wanted to take. What things do you need? I'll get them."

Thinking he would sell us the supplies, we named some that we might have done without until we reached Greenville. When I tried to pay him, he repeated that he could take no money.

"Accept it as a gift from Uncle Sam," he said. "Pay your income taxes, and if you ever go to Congress, fight red tape that will forbid selling a dollar's worth of necessities under prison penalty, yet permit giving away hundreds with only a reprimand."

Noon found us opposite the mouth of the Arkansas River, the southernmost point of the Joliet and Marquette expedition of 1673. A few historians declare that here De Soto discovered the Mississippi. Here stood the village of the Arkansae. Here, after the spring expedition of 1686, when he went to the Mississippi mouth seeking La Salle, Tonty left ten men to establish a settlement, the first in Arkansas and the beginning of Arkansas Post. The *Comet* reached Arkansas Post March 31, 1820, the first steamboat to ascend the river. The Arkansas River empties into the Mississippi from Desha county, named for Honorable Ben Desha. It was created December 12, 1838. Bolivar county across the river in Mississippi was established February 9, 1836, named for "The Liberator," General Simon Bolivar, the South American patriot.

During the Civil War a little town called Beulah was located in Mississippi about forty miles above Arkansas City. In 1863 near Beulah, a man said to have been General Charles Clark who shortly after became governor of Mississippi, dug a ditch at a point above, opposite the Arkansas mouth. A cut-off resulted: Beulah was left a mile and one-half from the Mississippi. The cut-off was called Napoleon, for the town at the Arkansas mouth. As we paddled along our Bogue Chitto, or "Big Creek," we searched in vain for Napoleon, once one of the largest cotton ports on the river. Five miles below Ozark Island, we nooned on a sandbar off Caulk Point, from two to four o'clock. A mile portage across Caulk Neck,

---

## HATEFUL HEAT: WILFUL WIND

---

from Monterey Bend to Cypress Bend, would have saved paddling fifteen miles.

"If we can have only one big day," the byword of the upper reaches, came into use again. Friends were expecting us Friday at Vicksburg. At this rate it would be Sunday. Forty miles the day before. All morning we fought the wind: by an early start and constant plugging, we made thirty-seven miles before lunch. This polygamous river, which winds through endless stretches, courting first one and then the other bank, was leading us a wild chase. Between Memphis and Vicksburg we met head winds all of the time: not lazy, languorous breezes linked with moonlight and romance, but hot, blustering winds that burned and battled constantly. Noon was merely a truce, night an armistice. The harder we fought the more avaricious of minutes and miles we became. This noon we kept on after the sun had reached its zenith; we had made up our minds to rest on Caulk Point. It seemed as though we were in a cauldron. We expected at every moment to see the fawn-hued, wind-whipped surface boil into a tawny, fudge-colored mass. The heat was so intense paint bubbles appeared on the canoe. Where drops of water were flicked onto us, blisters arose.

After the rest on Caulk Point, we rounded that finger of land, starting down Catfish Point and Cypress Bend. Shortly before dusk we passed the *Henry Thane*. Fat reds and corpulent purples spread luxuriously across the sun-tortured sky, followed by sombre shades. When we pulled our canoe onto the sandbar on the tip of Catfish Point, for more than half an hour channel lights on the banks had been burning.

Our camp on Cypress Bend was opposite Cypress Creek, which the Mississippi River Commission closed in 1921. The Safe River Committee of One Hundred, composed of spillway advocates of New Orleans, want this creek opened and a relief outlet constructed. They contend spillways into the Tensas and Atchafalaya basins and a discharge of the waters into the Gulf through the Atchafalaya past Morgan City, will make immeasurably safer all land between Helena and the Gulf along the Mississippi.

Where the last high water had deposited driftwood, we gathered some and made a fire. The world was ours. The Bible



---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

tells of Daniel having visions while walking by the riverside: usually they concerned wild beasts. We, too, had visions, but the only wild beast in our lives was this untamed river. All day we mulled around in the bitter, biting heat, on this artery which courses through the belly of the continent. Day after day, the magnificent spectacle of life unfolded before us mile by mile. At night, a few feet away, passed the romance-laden river laving dark, mysterious shores. When all else was silent, the river would tell us the tale of the valley, of itself. All nature in those solemn, sandbar hours, communed with us through sounds, smells, feelings: night unfolded hidden mysteries, occult things others may not know.

When the river "smelt late," as Huck Finn said, we would wrap our blankets about us and lie us down to pleasant dreams. No matter how hot the day, or how hot the night in the cities, on sandbars we slept under blankets. Far from bugs, mosquitoes, flies, we needed no netting, but always needed blankets. We rolled up in one apiece, with more under us: a Hudson Bay covered both of us. It was soaked every morning, so heavy was the dew. Usually we were in bed before nine, almost always on the water by five. No matter how tired we went to bed, we slept like the much talked-of logs, and arose daily feeling fit to battle the gods on Mount Olympus.

Four-fifty found us rounding Cypress Bend. Each sunrise was a birthday to this stream. The age-old waterway started life anew every twenty-four hours, vigorous, virile, vital. To us, too, each day was a new adventure, each morning a fresh start. We made fifty-three miles August 26: today we wanted more. At seven-thirty we breakfasted at Arkansas City. Above the town we passed crews gathering willows for wing dam construction, also the *Desha H. Kimball*, ferry plying between Arkansas City and Mound Landing, Mississippi. As we pulled up at the levee, the *Oleander*, light tender, passed us.

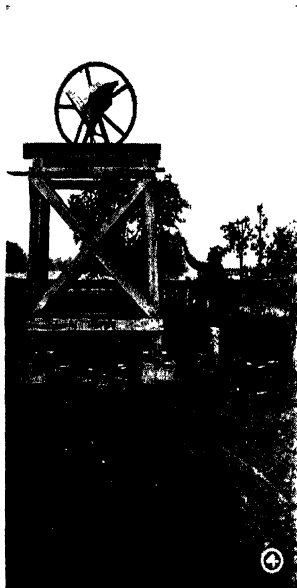
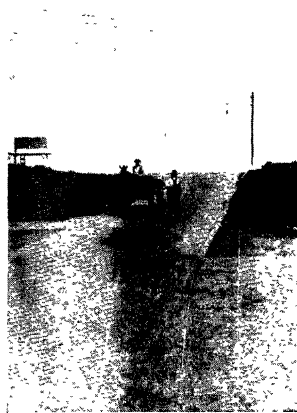
Arkansas City sets behind the levee, sunbaked, complacent. It looks very old, but seems to have "just growed" like Topsy. Its negro section seemed larger than the white part of town. Its population is said to be two thousand, and it has a large sawmill. Arkansas City possesses neither a beautifully decadent



(1) The author attempting to beautify himself while his companion read. Later the process was reversed, and the windbound hours on the Knowlton Post Office, Arkansas, rocks passed quickly.

(2) Allen Sulerud reading while The Charles H. Curley of St. Paul was windbound at Knowlton Post Office, just below Island Number Sixty-Seven.

(3) Drying the outfit on the sandbar at Commerce Cut-off, forty miles below Memphis. The bar is as level as a table and as sandy as the sugar some grocers sell.



(1) Negro driving his horse and wagon down an unpaved ramp at Greenville.

(2) A paved ramp or roadway over a levee, at Greenville.

(3) Cars awaiting the arrival of the ferry at Delta Point Landing, Louisiana. In high water the cars in this picture would wait much farther up the bank and the ferry would land about where they are now.

(4) The hostler on the Maxwell-Yerger plantation at Mound, Louisiana, calling the plantation employees back to work after their noon hour. All along the river these bells could be heard below Memphis, tolling the various hours of beginning and ceasing work.

---

## THE COURTEOUS CAPTAIN

---

past, nor possibilities for a glorious future. It is just a river town.

After leaving Arkansas City about nine-thirty, on Yellow Bend we got into a race. A houseboat left shore half a mile downstream. Through the field glasses we could see a gasoline launch towing it. We decided to overtake it. But the owners noticed us, decided otherwise, and started another gasoline launch. We paddled in pursuit down Georgetown Bend. The best race imaginable is a canoe versus a gas-propelled houseboat.

Off Ashbrook Point on Rowdy Bend, we passed the *Jewell* of Greenville, and we hand Captain Billie Hall the palm for being the most considerate steamboatman we met. We were close to shore, near a long, shallow stretch, where the waves piled up mountain high. We saw them and prepared for our first spill, as we had no time to cut across the bow of the *Jewell*. As he neared, Captain Hall slowed his boat and we rode the waves. We waved in appreciation and he saluted with a blast of the boat's whistle.

We missed no scenery by digging our paddles deeper as we chased the houseboat, for there was nothing to see except levees, trees, mud banks and willows. If the land between Memphis and Vicksburg had been cursed by a Salem witch, it could not have presented a more forlorn aspect. Off Linwood Neck, the *Controll* with two barges passed upstream, and several hundred yards downriver we went by the houseboat. Shortly before two o'clock we pulled up on Point Comfort, nineteen miles below Arkansas City. Here, after Allen had swallowed two or three pieces of glass, we discovered that the inside of our thermos bottle had been broken, and we strained the milk before continuing our lunch. We had intended to noon here only a short time. Instead, we stayed until after five o'clock, windbound for the second and last time on the journey.

The compensation for being windbound was a talk with a "river rat." A "river rat" is one who dwells on the river, living precariously by fishing, tending lights, making moonshine, or means unknown. This "rat" offered us drinks gratis, and regaled us with much better stories than the vile-smelling corn product of which he partook. He was from Canton, Missouri, and for ten years had wanted to go back, but had never been

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

able to scrape together enough money. Along the banks of our own Mississippi are derelicts as marooned as those human off-scourings of South Sea Islands, picturesquely portrayed in the movies. We talked to many who, because of wives, families, or poverty, cannot return to places they hold fondly in their memories. Yet we saw dozens of houseboats where apparently happy families dwelt, where the husband worked regularly, where cleanliness prevailed, and where, bit by bit, bank accounts were growing, and the occupants were leading lives preferable to cramped, crowded conditions in parts of cities where the earning abilities of the men would force them to live.

Not many miles by road from Greenville, but a goodly distance by river, we passed the largest cotton plantation in the United States, run by the Delta and Pine Land Company of Mississippi, with headquarters at Scott, and owned by the Fine Cotton Spinners' and Doublers' Association at Manchester, England. It borders the river for two miles southwest from the old Bolivar Landing. It has 25,000 acres under cultivation, four thousand negro tenants and fifteen hundred mules, and raises from nine to fifteen thousand bales of cotton each year.

After our enforced vacation on Point Comfort, we made a dozen miles before camping on Carter Point on Spanish Moss Bend; forty-three miles for the day, still many behind our plans, but only six hundred from journey's end. A steamboat passed us spurting into the sky a spark shower, which rapidly vanished and was instantly replaced. We thought how like the sparks that come from the smoke stacks of packets we are, glowing a short while, then disappearing into eternity.

Travelers say that only the Jordan in Palestine is more convoluted than the Mississippi. The most sinuous part of this serpentine stream is between Cairo and Red River. The most involved part of all is between Arkansas City and Greenville, where the river travels forty-five miles to cover fifteen miles as the birds fly. This stretch is called "The Bends," the main part of which is comprised of four great returning bends, separated by narrow necks. The reach above Greenville was known once as Lazy Man's Reach, for an old fisherman who lived just below Offutt's Landing, Mississippi. He would get

---

## LAZY MAN'S REACH

---

into his canoe in front of his house on Georgetown Bend, float forty miles to Greenville. There he would imbibe freely. Sober, he would purchase his simple supplies, and load them into his canoe. He would look upstream with a sigh and push off. The current would carry him downstream five miles to Lower Leland Landing on Leland Neck, where he would disembark, portage half a mile across and get into the canoe. Again drifting five miles, he would reach Tarpley Neck, five miles above Greenville. Portaging, he would reembark at Tarpley Landing and float five miles to the upper end of Spanish Moss Bend. He would carry his canoe and supplies half a mile across Linwood Neck and drift five miles down to opposite Point Comfort, at the upper end of Miller Bend. Carrying his canoe across the narrowest of the four necks, he would set the craft into the water on the upper side of Ashbrook Neck on Georgetown Bend, paddle a few strokes against the current, and he would be home. Four "drifts" downstream, about five miles each, four relightings of his pipe, four portages totaling less than two miles, and he had descended the Mississippi twenty miles to find himself forty miles above Greenville.

After paddling up and down these bends, we heartily favored cutting through the narrow necks and shortening the river. We fought headwinds on both sides of Ashbrook Point. Leland Neck, from which juts Point Chicot, opposite Greenville, is fifteen miles around.

"Why don't you let the river cut through the necks and shorten its channel?" we asked an engineer.

He explained that it would steepen the slope, disturb the whole regimen of the river for fifty or more miles in both directions, upset levee grades. The object of river engineers is to maintain levee grades and confine the river within its present channel.

Before daylight we were on the river. Ten minutes past five found us rounding Spanish Moss Bend with Greenville a dozen miles downstream. Before our eyes danced visions of wheat-cakes and all that accompanied them. During the long hours on the river, when we were struggling against wind and waters, one of our pastimes was discussing in detail the things we would

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

eat if a fairy godmother were to appear and ask us what we most desired to eat.

About eight o'clock we climbed the paved levee, and beheld the "Queen City of the Delta." We were caught by the spell of gracious Greenville. For three desperately hard days we had followed a wind-blown, reptilian river, enmeshed in its mazes as it coiled and uncoiled its way to the Gulf and glory. Greenville possessed more charm than any city on the river except New Orleans. It was very old, but not ragglety, tagglety. Washington county was established in 1827: when it was later divided, the county seat was moved from Princeton to Old Greenville, one mile south of the present city. Most of Old Greenville was destroyed during the Civil War, the balance toppling into the hungry river.

The original settlement was called Greenbay for Henry Green, an early settler. The upper portion was known as Hunston or Huntley for Abijah Hunt, a rich pioneer merchant and owner of the first gin in the county. Located on Bachelors' Bend, Greenville once was a bachelors' paradise. The bend was named because the settlement across the river consisted almost entirely of bachelors, a free and easy lot. They drank, gambled, cursed, fought, yet considered the protection of a woman's name a sacred duty.

Steamboatmen call the stretch between Memphis and Vicksburg the most desolate on the entire river. Its constant curving never depressed us, no matter how laboring over them tired us. But Greenville was a welcome oasis in a desert of water heat. It stands out in our memories as the most polite place we visited. It is the one city where post office clerks are courteous enough to tear off the extra row of white paper on a sheet of stamps.

At Greenville, I got from Charles H. West, senior member of the Mississippi River Commission, formerly chief engineer of the Mississippi Levee District, an idea of the river from an engineering point of view. First only a few levees protected the lowest places along the river. Later slaves built the dikes: then the entire countryside did it. Not until the late fifties did people north of Red River attempt to form a levee district. The great flood of 1882 covered the lowlands from hill to hill, ranging

---

## RIVER COMMISSION AIMS

---

from thirty to seventy-five miles across, from Cairo to the Gulf. The Mississippi River Commission was created in 1879, but the first important federal aid came after the flood of 1882. Now towns and settlements replace the deserted wilderness found before the levees were built. Before the levees reached their present proportions all settlers had skiffs and bateaux. During floods they hunted, fished, and visited, waiting for the waters to recede. Today a short distance behind the levees it is a rare thing to find a boat.

The first official engineering action of the federal government with regard to the Mississippi, was when two army engineers, General S. Bernard and J. G. Totten, made a study and in 1822 presented an elaborate report, in which they declared construction of dikes the only practicable means of river control. The policy of the Mississippi River Commission with regard to flood control, is to keep so far as is possible the flood flow within the bank-to-bank width of the river. This places the levees on high ground, reducing their cost; protects more land from overflow; prevents cross-currents and resultant fill within the river banks in flood to the detriment of low-water channels and navigation. There are now completed 1824 miles of levee line on the Father of Waters. These dikes have required approximately five hundred million cubic yards of earth. The commission has opposed the spillway or relief outlet plan because, while some figures show that the project would be successful, there are no precedents. The only analogies available, as in cases of crevasses, indicate that the effect of a spillway would be disappointing.

Commission members oppose a reservoir system for the Mississippi, as three-fourths of the flood volume of that stream comes out of the Ohio. In a time of comparatively even rainfall over the entire Ohio Valley, it would need a reservoir of seven thousand square miles to reduce the flood level at New Orleans two feet. The six reservoirs on the Upper Mississippi have almost no effect on high water at St. Paul, but two feet in extreme low water, and on the lower river no effect whatever.

Nor would reforestation have any effect on the Mississippi, the Commission believes, for scrub growth that has sprung up in place of cut timber is as much a deterrent to rapid run-



---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

off as was the original forest. The greatest flood in St. Louis history was in 1844, before the woodsman's axe destroyed the forests in the only places where reforestation might be considered a flood deterrent. Contour plowing is another plan suggested to withhold water. This is impossible to accomplish as the Illinois or Missouri farmer, who ordinarily has all the water he needs and in flood years too much, would not plough furrows in his land to hold back water so that the sugar or rice planter or farmer in southern states might have their lands slightly benefitted.

Levees usually are built with a crown or top width of eight feet and side slopes of one vertical to three horizontal. A banquette reenforces the land side of the slope from five to eight feet below the top of the levee. This runs from thirty feet wide for levees up to sixteen feet, to forty feet for levees above that height. After levees are finished and dressed into shape, the surfaces are sodded with Bermuda grass, which forms a close mat over the embankment. In levee maintenance, weeds and bushes are kept out; in many districts levees are mowed with tractor-drawn mowers. Revetment to prevent caving is costly. The bank below low water line is covered with mats, three to four hundred feet wide, to prevent undermining. Above low water line the bank is graded to slope from three to four horizontal to one vertical, and paved with ripp-rapp or sheet concrete. Below Red River the under water cover is made of frame mats, which are made of timber frames filled with pliable willow brush. Above there fascine mats are used: usually they are woven until they are from one to one and one-half feet thick, and held with cables. They are sunk with rocks and completely cover the sub-aqueous ground.

More than sixty percent of the principal floods on the lower river came out of the Ohio. About one thousand million cubic yards of earth are torn out of the banks of the river each year, or, more than nine and one-half acres, sixty-six feet deep, for each mile of river. This is lessened each year by revetments, which stop caving and leave the river to take care of itself in flood times. When the levee system is completed, it will cut away many sandbars, stabilize the channel and stop bank caving.

---

## WATERMELONS FOR A DIME

---

We emerged from Mr. West's office at Greenville, brimming over with information about the great river.


"Allen," I reminded him, "Some authority says that flowing water is merely the interchange of atoms."

"Yes?" replied Allen in an abstract voice. Then, "Which reminds me that watermelons are ten cents and that we are neglecting them."

We proceeded with alacrity to make up for lost time and to materially reduce the stock of watermelons at Greenville.

## CHAPTER XXV

### *From Greenville to Lake Providence; Spontaneous combustion and a flare; We reach Vicksburg and visit Mound.*

HERE was no reason to leave Greenville other than the fierce desire to reach Vicksburg, and press onward to the Gulf. As we stepped into our canoe and pushed off, we passed the *W. H. Fry*. We were practically out of The Bends, though the ambiguous river had many convolutions to make before it won a fairly certain course near Baton Rouge.

Five miles below Greenville we passed Warfield Point, about which Mr. West had told us a story of the early days. Here lived one of the many bachelors who settled in the vicinity in those long ago days. He was fond of indulging in the cup that cheers. He would ride to town, tie his horse, go into the saloon and get drunk. Hours later he would come out to find the bridle empty. The horse, realizing that his master would neither feed nor water him, had departed for home. The bachelor, not quite so gay, would take the bridle and walk five miles home. He determined to teach his tricky horse a lesson. He tied him tight with a stout rope, and proceeded into the saloon. All night he played, sang and drank; all the next day and second night. He emerged from the saloon to find the horse there, gaunt, the ground kicked up, two nights and a day without food or water.

"Ah, you old scoundrel," he laughed, "Now I'm treating you as you treated me." Taking the saddle off the horse, he threw it over his shoulder and walked home.

Our progress was satisfactory: we did not have to combat the fiendish force that had so deterred us above Greenville. It was muggy, a day laden with a stifling, stagnant heat that made breathing difficult. Our nooning August 26 was in the canoe. We had pulled up on shore and found that the river was little hotter than on land, for the sun was heavily overcast. We ate

as we drifted languidly on Kentucky Bend, twenty miles below Greenville.

To the unimaginative, paddling is at best academic exercise. This trip is only for those who love canoeing intensely, who can stand heat without complaining, who can laugh at dozens of trifling but seemingly important things that arise, who can see humor where none exists, and ignore opportunities for countless unpleasantnesses.

A few miles below Cracraft Towhead, we passed the southern border of Arkansas, our companion for three hundred and ninety miles, and saw Louisiana, the "Creole State," tenth on the trip. Along the right shore the Mississippi was to lave Louisiana for the remaining five hundred and fifty-six miles. About seven-thirty, ten miles below Cracraft Towhead, we encamped on Duncansby Towhead. The river, unusually muddy, was on a slight rise. We wanted to press on, despite the rapidly enveloping darkness, but the sandbar was so flat, so clean, so inviting, and we were so tired from the muggy air, that we camped on a towhead in the middle of the river. In Louisiana across from us was East Carroll parish, created in 1877, named for Charles Carroll of Carrollton. In Mississippi was Issaquena, "Deer River" in Indian, a county established January 23, 1844. Parishes in Louisiana correspond to counties.

Our prayer for "just one good day" had been answered. We had come sixty-two miles from Carter Point, stopped at Greenville, and now it would take a hurricane to keep us from reaching Vicksburg Friday. Someone has said that courage is holding out one minute longer. We felt philosophical as we dug wells and made beds: we had held on a full day longer. As we ate two boats passed. Long before we could see them, their engine sounds came chuggadee-chug, chuggadee-chug, beating their way upriver. We lay awake and talked, content with the peace of night, the blanket of stars. We thought of heat—crowded cities—stars in the heavens—steamboats passing, reverberating on the dark flood—then quiet, cool, deep-breathed air, sandbars and sweet slumber,—and silence.

This towhead was just one of many that in moderately high water are submerged completely. Other stretches of land that in high water are islands, were now parts of the mainland.

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

This changing river alters shorelines and channel each year, causing as much disturbance as the annual spring house cleaning. We noticed as we went along, even on the most dreary stretches, the inhabitants profess to believe their own the most beautiful surroundings.

We left Duncansby Towhead at five-thirty, Thursday, August 27, and rounded Wilson Point, opposite Mayersville, Mississippi, as the sun appeared. There the United States snag-boat *Wright* was already at work. The Captain evidently was anxious to finish the job and move on, for we saw no other labor on the river at such an early hour. Mayersville is county seat of Issaquena county; the town was named for David Mayers, an early extensive landowner.

Ten miles below Duncansby Towhead we came to Stack Island, where, at the "Crow's Nest," one of the most daring gangs of pirates in Mississippi River history lived a century ago, plundering boats that passed here. One night they were surrounded and wiped out. We need not search for details. Even the river chooses not to reveal this secret, for blood soon becomes as water and memories of the men who suddenly joined another world in 1809 could be pleasant to none save the descendants of those who rid the river of the gang.

About eight o'clock we passed Lake Providence, just below Stack Island, where revetment work was in full swing. We listened to negroes singing as they worked, building protections for the valuable land behind the levees. This region is called Stack Island Reach or Lake Providence Reach, with Plum Point Reach, the two worst stretches on the Mississippi for shoals, sandbars, cutting banks. On the lower end of Lake Providence Bend, off Ajax Bar, we breakfasted about nine o'clock; Vicksburg, our destination on the morrow, sixty miles away.

The name of the town was Providence until it was changed to conform with the name of the post office, Lake Providence. The town has been in existence for more than a century, but because of the inroads of the river it has been moved at least twice. A century ago large amounts of produce and other commerce was moved by keelboats. The desperadoes who swarmed the river seldom were found below here. Those who

---

## SINGING AND WORKING NEGROES

---

had run this far were safe from bandits the rest of the way to New Orleans. Hence the point came to be called Providence Point, and the lake nearby Lake Providence.

How many times during the long, quiet days, when it was too hot even for the river to murmur its secrets, we heard floating from the levees songs of negroes at work. Clearest in my memory is the morning we passed Lake Providence, where a large crew was laboring on revetments. It was hot, and growing hotter. A white man would have grumbled about all heat, past, present, and future. But the negroes sang, songs we had never heard before, some that probably they had not known were inside of them until the moment of utterance. They sang spirituals, or parts of them, such as:

*Didn't my Lord deliver Daniel, deliver  
Daniel, deliver Daniel.*

*Didn't my Lord deliver Daniel, an' why not-a  
every man.*

or

*O, po' sinner, O - now is yo' time.*

*O, po' sinner, O, what yo' gwine to do when yo'  
lamps burn down.*

or, perhaps,

*Yo' may bury me in de Eas',*

*Yo' may bury me in de Wes',*

*But I'll hear de trumpet soun' in dat mornin',  
in dat mornin',*

They sang rollicking airs, happy songs, sorrowful tunes sometimes, too, but always with verve that washed out unhappiness, deposed care. Mammy singers of vaudeville and musical revues, professional entertainers, are as much inferior in singing to the plantation or levee workers, the blacks of the cotton, cane, or rice fields, as a foot-pumped organ in a rural church to a deep-voiced cathedral organ. The rhythm, melody, feeling, swing and measured movement of the immortal cadences of these primitive-minded workers has weird beauty. They sing as they drive along roads, pile rocks, pull wires, or carry loads, and often when just "settin'" still!

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

What a cruel world it is to silence the music that is in men's souls! And how wonderful that these products of a system that only two generations ago made them property, have been able to survive. A few generations from barbarism, these negroes are a problem and a pleasure. Throughout the south the negro has his place. By temperament and background he belongs there, in the rural districts. None who has heard negroes at work, singing as the sun mounts higher, can feel quite the same towards life or towards them. They draw from the depths of their great chests sound after sound of primitive, oftentimes prayerful fibre, deep bass notes with organ overtones; sometimes highpitched tenor strains of wind instruments. Near at hand, or floating across the water, they have always a haunting weirdness that calls to mind nostalgic murmurs of waves on far-flung shores, lonesome winds on frozen fields.

Off Arcadia Point above Alsatia-Salem Bend, we passed the *Arthur Heider* of the Mississippi River Commission, upstream bound. Our siesta August 27 was on Willow Point, Louisiana, where Albemarle Bend makes one of the widest sweeps on the river. Within sight was the *Illinois*, for which we had a particular affection, because the cooks gave us hot meat sandwiches and a pie.

While resting on Willow Point, the explosion took place. The *Tallulah* passed upstream with barges. Perhaps it was the fault of *Tallulah*; perhaps either or both of ours. But probably it would have been a case of spontaneous combustion, had there been no other cause. Voltaire said, "The progress of rivers to the ocean is not so rapid as that of man to error."

Ten minutes after the *Tallulah* passed on the opposite side of the river, waves rushed up on our shore, hurled water all over the canoe and soaked the outfit. I had been writing: Allen reading. Neither noticed what was happening until the damage was done. A few "wise" remarks, sarcastic comments, unnecessary allusions to things in general, then flames. I commented on the Nordic temperament: Allen said something about a "gloriously unscientific mind." A gorgeous fire for several minutes, accusations, blazing denials; counter charges and counter denials. Silent work for some minutes. Then sitting in the shade, looking out over the boiling, blistering river,

---

## FIGHT AND MAKE UP

---

tawny, tameless, surging and singing toward the Gulf. Moments of heated thought. Regret over things that might have been said, brilliant thrusts not made. A burning fever, a fever of strength, not weakness.

Who was to blame? Day after day we had been coursing down this artery, baking and burning under the intense mid-summer heat, encountering every acerbity of the river, during the hottest spell the lower river had experienced in years. We had battled waves and winds. Though in excellent physical shape, in the past ten days we had been worn down by the constant beating of brandished waters, the sun everlastingly biting at our bodies. Little things, things that later seemed petulant, were surprisingly annoying. Things that made no difference in the city were paramount now. A word that had one meaning in daily life assumed a new connotation: things meant for compliments sounded like insults.

In moments of danger, when unusual stress required perfect co-ordination, we reacted. But we were trained too fine. We often hear of boxers snapping at their best friends before a battle, of quarrels between lifelong chums on the same football team just before a game. What then may we expect of persons cooped up in a canoe for days, constantly together, required by their work to move in the same rhythm, to bend to the same task hour after hour? Small wonder that trifles grew to colossal importance, peccadilloes became heinous vices.

For more than a week we had not been out of sight of one another. No matter what friends two persons are, such a strain is too much. Bang! the fireworks went off. Burning anger followed by silent sulking. Then came an appreciation of what one had done for the other, of things shared, difficulties conquered. A smile, a rueful laugh, a joke that probably was less funny than welcome. A few minutes later, out on the river, two very bad, but congenial voices shouted at the yellow stream:

*Oh, a sailor's life*

*Is a sailor's joy;*

*Ship ahoy, ship ahOOYYY.*

On a long, wide sandbar we slept the night of August 27, at the lower end of Millikens Bend, fifteen miles from Vicksburg.



---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

The day was a success from the point of mileage; following our sixty-two mile day, came this fifty-seven mile paddle, leaving five hundred miles to the end and sixteen to Vicksburg. The explosion might have been disastrous for friends less staunch. For us it cleared the air: little things that might have continued to annoy were shot into the sky by the blast. At five-thirty, Friday, August 28, we were drifting lazily along enjoying an "eye-opener," an orange apiece. A few minutes later we were paddling on the last leg of the hardest stretch of the journey.

One example of a joke on man enjoyed by the Mississippi is Centennial Cut-off, made in 1876, just above Vicksburg. During the Civil War, Union gunboats experienced difficulty passing the batteries at Vicksburg. Grant tried to dig a canal across Delta Point, Louisiana, to divert the river from Vicksburg, but failed. In 1876, the stream changed its course, creating Lake Centennial and taking the Mississippi away from the city. The government diverted the Yazoo River through the Yazoo Canal, and Vicksburg again is accessible by water.

Opposite Delta Point on Centennial Cut-off, we narrowly escaped drowning, when we became involved with the *Charles J. Miller*, ferry running between Vicksburg and Delta Point Landing, Louisiana, and the *Albatross*, car transfer which carries trains from the east bank of the river to Delta Point. The *Charles J. Miller*, coming out of the Yazoo Canal, headed straight for *The Charles H. Curley of St. Paul*. I guided the canoe toward the left bank. The *Charles J. Miller* turned still farther in. We feared being caught and swamped between the boats. We paddled furiously. The river gurgled about us. We sped over the waters, escaping the bow of the ferry by a few feet. Had we been caught between the car transfer and ferry we would have been swamped by the waves of the two boats meeting at cross angles. We had just time to turn and meet the wash from the ferry, and, paddling behind it, get far enough from shore to avoid the back wash.

Past the ferry and car transfer, and there before us was Vicksburg, with a skyline like graphs showing the moods of life, many small ups and downs with a few sharp peaks reaching to heaven. Another milestone! Democracy loves success. We

---

## BACK TO CIVILIZATION

---

loved this river because of its success. It knows what it wants, where it is going. Soon we should learn "Where Goes The River." The pentads between Memphis and Knowlton Post Office, and between that point and Vicksburg were the hardest on the trip, the most enervating, but they brought results.

Vicksburg! Sweeping down Centennial Cut-off, the river turns right and skirts the Mississippi bluffs before circling on the lower side of Delta Point. We turned left into the Yazoo Canal and paddled along the levee. Save at St. Louis, there was more waterfront life here than at any place we had reached. Launches, ferries, houseboats, tugs, steamboats. At the United States Coast Guard cutter *Yocona* we tied up. Captain August Anderson, in charge, and A. L. Magee, engineer, were watching for us. Our outfit and canoe were stored aboard the *Yocona*.

Never had we been so glad to reach civilization. The trip from Memphis, actually eight days, had seemed a year. We met with more opposition from the elements during these days than we found in any period of twice that length. The scenery is not beautiful, but we thought it more attractive than did the rivermen with whom we talked. Though the vexatious wind, breeding voluptuous waves, had not aided us, it had at least given us soul-stirring hours.

The joy of a hair cut, shave, shower bath and swim at the Vicksburg Young Men's Christian Association, cool linen, polished shoes, and a visit to an ice cream parlor where we learned that our eyes were larger than our capacities! Then a walk around Vicksburg. From the hills we looked down on the Mississippi, shaking its tawny mane as it rounded Delta Point, this writhing river, this naive stream, ages old yet youthful as dawn, bearing its golden flood onward to the Gulf. We did things on the lower stretches that we could not have stood when we began the trip. We made distances, endured discomforts, survived heats that in June would have sent us home and to bed. We felt a fullness of living that we had never known, a joy in being, a power and passion for doing. We fought our way through waves that the first fortnight would have sent us scurrying to shelter. The accrued vigor of thorough conditioning carried us along with a momentum that

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

startled even us. But we welcomed the feeling of ease and laziness that came with the knowledge that we were on a vacation.

Vicksburg was settled during the eighteenth century. The Post of Nogales, ironically called the "Gibraltar of Louisiana," was built by the Spanish where the city now stands. Here they also erected Fort Sugarloaf and Fort Mount Vigie. Two small blockhouses, Fort Gayoso and Fort Ignatius were built in the last decade of the eighteenth century. Vicksburg had a much later origin than Natchez, one hundred miles down the river. After the Spanish regime, the settlement was called Walnut Hills until 1820 when Vicksburg was founded and laid out by the Reverend Newett Vick and his son-in-law, the Reverend John Lane, Methodist preachers. Some historians say that Yazoo means "River of Death." Others declare Yazoo is a Uchee word meaning "Leaf."

There is no more heroic page in history than the defense of Vicksburg, no more dogged, determined effort to gain an objective than that of Grant in laying siege to the point he believed the key to the Confederacy. The city really was beleaguered for a year. July 4, 1862, the Union fleets made an attack, which was repulsed with slight losses. A few days later the Confederate ram *Arkansas*, entering the Mississippi from the Yazoo, broke the Union fleet formations. July 22, 1862, the Union forces temporarily abandoned the siege. A fleet bearing the forces of Grant and Sherman arrived before Vicksburg January 24, 1863. After disposing of some outlying Confederate soldiery, Grant opened the way to Vicksburg, and May 18, 1863, stood before the city. The "Great Siege" was begun!

We spent a day exploring the Vicksburg battlefields, two northern young men paying tribute to all who took part in the "Great Siege" of Vicksburg, from March 29 to July 4, 1863. The investing line was fifteen miles long. Late in June the Union forces were 71,000 men. A great attack was planned for July 6. General Pemberton, learning of this, knowing his men were too enfeebled by constant duty and lack of food to withstand the assault, surrendered the city July 4, 1863. Thus the back of the Confederacy was broken.



(1) A huge tow of rock, coming downstream off Delta Point Landing, to be used in revetment construction.



(3) The levee and skyline of Vicksburg, from the Charles J. Miller. Taken in the Yazoo Canal.



(2) Awaiting the arrival of the ferry Charles J. Miller at Delta Point Landing, Louisiana.



(4) The battlefields of Vicksburg, and the city and river in the distance, from an observation tower.



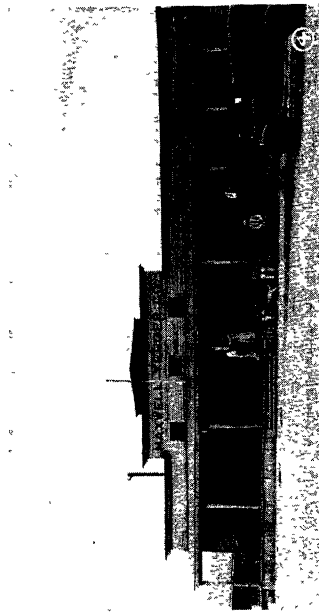
(1) Above Lake Providence, showing how a cutting bank is shorn off by the hungry river, with trees and bushes dropped into the stream by undermining and caving.



(2) Revetment of the bank by the Mississippi River Commission. In the low water the under water surfacing is visible, with the dirt levee above the concrete. At Lake Providence.



(3) The paved levee at Greenville, Mississippi, where the height or depth of the water fluctuates many feet annually.



(4) At Mound, the general store, patronized chiefly by the negroes of the plantation; a typical plantation store.

---

## MOSQUITOES AND COTTON

---

By midafternoon we were ready to repair to Mound, Louisiana, fifteen miles away. It takes at least ten days, usually fourteen, for a flood passing Cairo to reach Vicksburg. There had been no visit of yellow fever this far up the Mississippi since 1877. The canoe and outfit were stowed safely. There was nothing about which to worry! Late afternoon brought us, with the cooling sundown breezes, to Mound, on the Maxwell-Yerger plantation, where we were guests of Hugh Wallace and Travis McNeel, junior entomologists at the government "mosquito station," and Mr. and Mrs. George Yerger, owners of the plantation. Here we received the wonderful old-time southern hospitality, famed in song and story.

After the enervating river heat, it was joy to remain in bed late, until nearly seven o'clock, and to think of how pleasant life is. On cool, white sheets, after nights in blankets, we stretched and dozed, lazily looking at the sun pushing over the horizon. After days of eating meals on sandbar tables, the contrast of many persons sitting at dinner was eventful. Relieved from cares, the pleasure we found in trying new southern dishes, in the dignity and charm of the old plantation home, made meals momentous. Sitting in the evening, talking or listening to the others with their soft, southern voices, melodious conversations—how we enjoyed it, especially in contrast with the harsh elements, our companions for days.

We drove over the entire plantation, which is reputed the largest cotton plantation in the world owned by one man. We saw negroes at work, or sitting by their little whitewashed flower-covered cabins. We saw them talking and laughing at the plantation store on Saturday. Because it rained Sunday, and the roofs leaked, services in the little negro churches were called off, but at other places we heard their religious pleasures and felt then, as we did always when we saw many of them together, the age-old yearning of all peoples of all times. We rested, recuperated, and regained energy and enthusiasm. At Vicksburg we took our third injection of typhoid serum, but neither of us felt any effect. We saw cotton picked, a gin operated, and heard the songs of negroes in the fields, called to work by the great tuneful plantation bells.

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

By the time we reached Vicksburg, we were experts on mosquitoes, bashfully proclaiming ourselves the foremost authorities on the subject. We learned below Baton Rouge, however, that we had been vainglorious, and we were punished accordingly. We gathered information about mosquitoes from Dr. W. V. King, associate entomologist in charge of the Bureau of Entomology station at Mound, from G. H. Bradley, assistant entomologist, and Hugh Evan Wallace and Travis J. McNeel. Previously our thoughts about mosquitoes were summed up in the quatrain:

*Singing, stinging, all day long.  
How I hate you and your wicked song!  
Shooing, scratching, all day through,  
You nasty little skeeter, I hate you.*

Airplanes are being used to distribute arsenic dust in the effort to control insect pests affecting cotton. Several times we had seen planes flying low, "dusting the cotton." The Delta laboratory of the Bureau of Entomology, United States Department of Agriculture, is at Tallulah. Airplanes skirt the lakes and swamps of this region, dusting a thin layer of paris green, killing a certain type of mosquito. Other types that do not feed from the surface of swamps and lakes are not affected, but the operation kills the pests in great numbers. Not enough is dusted to injure fish or domestic cattle that drink water of dusted areas.

We had passed through Minnesota, Wisconsin and Iowa during wet spells, felt the full vigor of massed mosquito attacks in the north, but we really knew nothing about them even yet.

George Yerger, Senior, believes in teaching his sons the various aspects of running a large plantation. Accordingly, George Yerger, Junior, when we visited Mound, was working part of the summer vacation in his father's store, awaiting the opening of Louisiana State University in September. A negro woman came into the store and said, "I'd like to get a pair o' flesh cullahed stockings, Mistah George, if ya please."

George handed her a pair of black stockings!

## CHAPTER XXVI

*We leave Vicksburg; Grand Gulf; we spend my birthday at Natchez; In the dark we are mistaken for pig purloiners.*

**F**IT as fiddles we left our friends at Delta Point Landing early September 1 for Vicksburg from where we started down the Yazoo Canal, Natchez bound. We had been energized and were happy to be on the river, reaching out day after day into space, grasping huge armfuls of distance, unaided by steam or gasoline, relying only on our four-arm-two-back engines. As we paddled down the Yazoo Canal to where its clear, green waters join the fawn flood, we passed the *Charles J. Miller* and *Albatross*, and the *Mobile* and *Cairo* at the Federal Barge Line dock. On our left were high hills where brother once opposed brother; on our right the tawny stream; beyond it the low land of Louisiana, weighted with a bumper cotton crop in the picking.

By the time we reached Racetrack Towhead, five miles below the *Yocona*, the hills were a purple line on the horizon. We saw no more until we reached Natchez. There was music in our hearts, strength in our arms; paddles responded to our touch. The canoe seemed glad to be free again, gliding over a lonely, quiet river, free from things mundane, unhampered by wind, unannoyed by waves. The afternoon was hot, ninety-three degrees weather reports said, with much humidity, but a cool breeze ambled across the river, spiritedly enough to relieve the mugginess.

Though the sun beat down, and though the scenery elicited no such words as "Wonderful," "Sublime," we minded not. We imagined that we were officers of Vasco de Gama, circumnavigating Africa en route to India, or John Cabot leaving Bristol on the *Matthew* in 1497. We shipped with Sir Francis Drake in the sixteenth century, and won wealth and honor with this most famed of Elizabeth's seadogs. We sailed in our day dreams with Sir Henry Morgan in the seventeenth century,



---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

joining that hardy Welsh buccaneer in all his exploits. We sailed around the world with Magellan, rounding the Straits in 1520.

We surmounted all time, all boundaries, defied chemistry, changed from British buccaneers to Castilian adventurers to Italian explorers. In one afternoon we possessed Damascus and Bagdad, sailed the Black Sea and cruised the Mediterranean, crossed the Persian Gulf and headed our navies for Cathay. We owned spices and silks of China, won and gave away fabrics and precious stones of India and Turkey. Columbus leaving Palos in 1492 had no more glorious adventures before him than we dreamed each day, as our paddles moved hour after hour in the beating sun. Marco Polo, that gallant thirteenth century Venetian, in all his travels experienced nothing that could rival our conjurings during these hot summer hours, when we crossed the River Styx, sailed the ancients' Sea of Darkness, and navigated countless miles of uncharted waters.

As we dreamed and pushed seaward, the sun became a molten disc, which fell suddenly from sight. Trees grew gaunt; lights in the sky ranged from a nameless hue overhead to purple on the horizon. At such a time points sharpen, currents run faster, mysterious currents, the rippled shore advances and recedes. The canoe goes easier, too rapidly almost. Black holes yawn ominously, but into them we never fall. Night steals on gradually, then rushes upon us.

At nine o'clock, after rounding Newtown Bend, we camped on a sandbar at Davis Cut-off. This cut-off took place in 1867, forming Palmyra Lake and Davis Island. We were at the lower end of Warren county, established December 22, 1809, named for General Joseph Warren who fell at the Battle of Bunker Hill. Opposite us was Tensas parish, formed in 1842 and named for the Indian tribe.

Our distance after leaving Vicksburg at two o'clock September 1 was satisfactory: we placed thirty-one miles behind us. Our start next morning was late: skies were dark and we did not get onto the river until six o'clock. As we rounded Yucatan Bend below Point Pleasant, we passed the largest flock of goats we have ever seen. The hillside was alive with.

---

## FIRST SIGN OF FALL

---

goats: every one appeared to be laughing at our early morning labors. After rounding Yucatan Point on Hard Times Bend, just above Coffee Point, we began watching for Travis McNeel. He was going to do some mosquito work at Lake St. Joseph, near here, and we had arranged to breakfast together. After waiting some minutes, we saw "Mac" running along the levee, arms waving and shouting as though he were being chased by the goats. Yucatan Point is said to be the largest sandbar on the river. After a short rest and breakfast, and solemn warnings not to tip over, we left McNeel.

About four miles below breakfast we reached Grand Gulf Landing and Grand Gulf Island. Grand Gulf was once an important river town in Mississippi, the shipping point for Port Gibson. The river here formed a large whirlpool, caused by the current rushing against a large rock. A westward shift of the stream left the town stranded, another community laughed at by the Father of Waters.

Below Grand Gulf was Hard Scrabble Bend, beyond which on Bondurant Towhead on Bruinsburg Bend, twenty-seven miles below daybreak, we pulled up for a three-hour siesta to escape the humid, disheartening heat; 96 degrees today. While we rested, a houseboat drifted lazily by, turning easily in the current. The first sign of fall. Within a few weeks scores of houseboats would be heading south to warmer climes, sunnier skies and easier life.

Shortly after reembarking we passed the *Eugenia Tully* of Memphis, headed upstream, and, ten miles below Bayou Pierre, started around Rodney Bend. Into the Mississippi from the east empties a small stream, Petit Gulf. This town of Rodney, nearby, was laid out in 1826, named for Judge Thomas Rodney, a popular territorial judge.

As it grew dark, we rounded Spithead Towhead on Kempe Bend and started down the long stretch toward Waterproof Cut-off, made in 1884, named for the little town of Waterproof, Louisiana, at the lower end of Kempe Bend. We slept on a huge sandbar in mid-river. Louisiana was on both sides of us for the first time. Waterproof Cut-off left Coles Point, Louisiana, east of the river, nearly surrounded by Mississippi. Anxious to reach Natchez as early as possible the next day,

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

we paddled until nine-thirty: in inky darkness for an hour, after that by moonlight. It was cool after a humid day; we felt a peace, contentment, a luxury of moving in perfect harmony, the music of swaying bodies and bending blades in the silent southern night. After we pulled up on our sandbar, we heard a steamboat chugging its way upstream. By the time we had made camp and eaten, it was only abreast of us; when all was ready for morning, it was still in sight.

"That boat wouldn't have had much chance against the *Natchez* or *Robert E. Lee*, would it?" Allen remarked.

The comment stirred memories of the famous boats in the palmy steamboat days. Constant improvements in steamboats, each year bringing "bigger and better" boats, stronger boilers, faster lines, sturdier hulls, made building and operating rivalry intensely keen. Not only sporting, but business instincts were aroused. The fastest boats drew the best and largest crowds. This meant increased revenue and greater profits. Steamboat racing reached its climax with the building of the *J. M. White*, *Natchez*, and *Robert E. Lee*. The *J. M. White* run was never beaten for the distance between New Orleans and Cairo: when marks were set later the river had cut off several oxbows. *J. M. White* made it in three days, six hours, forty-four minutes. The *Robert E. Lee* established the mark that still stands for steamboats between New Orleans and Cairo, in the race of 1870, when it made the distance in three days, one hour, one minute, but the river was many miles shorter than in 1844.

Smack! Crack! Smack! I was in the air, had grabbed my assailant and we were struggling in the water nearby. It might have been a river pirate, an Indian attack, or a river tough. It was only Allen, paddling a certain part of my anatomy to remind me that it was daylight, September 3, my birthday. Allen escaped only because I did not want to bring bad luck for the whole year by fighting on my birthday; I sat on a pillow most of the day. At five-forty we were started, with *Natchez* twenty-four miles away. At Giles Bend we were five miles by land from *Natchez*, but another great swing in the river around Cowpen Point, made fifteen miles to paddle. Off Giles Bend we passed the *Teche* of the Mississippi River

---

## *THE FAMOUS 'SECRET TREATY'*

---

Commission, laboring upstream with a load of willows. Shortly after ten o'clock the Natchez bluffs loomed ahead.

Romantic Natchez! Historic Natchez! Onetime wicked Natchez! Now, peaceful, quiet Natchez, dignified, cool in spite of the thermometer at 98 degrees. La Salle en route to the Gulf of Mexico was the first white man on this site. Iberville in 1700 declared that here was the most prosperous and best-looking Indian village he had ever seen. The location was so good that the French colonizers laid out a village and built Fort Rosalie, naming it for Countess Pontchartrain, wife of the then Minister of France.

In 1716 the Natchez made war upon French settlers, robbing and murdering. Bienville with a small detachment of soldiers, ascended the Mississippi and tricked the Indians into giving up their chiefs, including the Great Sun. Before releasing them, Bienville forced them to surrender the murderers and furnish lumber for constructing the fort, which was occupied August 3, 1716.

In November 1762 the French king signed the famous "secret treaty," presenting to the king of Spain all of Louisiana. In 1763 Great Britain, Spain and France at the end of the Seven Years War, entered into a treaty, ignored the "secret treaty," and most of the possessions east of the Mississippi were transferred to Great Britain. Thus the flag of St. George floated over Natchez' fortifications. Fort Rosalie was renamed Fort Panmure for a British minister. Difficulties between the Spanish rulers of Louisiana and the British heads of West Florida reached a head in 1770: Galvez seized Fort Panmure.

At the dawn of the nineteenth century, Natchez was not only the seat of government of Mississippi, but the center of a great trade territory. Constantly loading and unloading at her levee were boats: some months the entire levee was crowded with bales of cotton, white gold of the southland. In one season, early in the 1800's, aggregate cotton sales in the Natchez district were \$700,000. Natchez also was once the social and intellectual center of the state. Its great cotton activities attracted planters of wealth and influence from the surrounding country. The first cotton ever shipped by steamboat on the Mississippi was sent from Natchez.

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

Practically all of the city today stands atop the two hundred foot high bluffs against which the Mississippi throws itself at every overflow. Natchez-Under-the-Hill is mostly gone. Boatmen who descended the river to New Orleans, stopped here en route north, and went home by overland trails, oftentimes to death at the hands of robbers. The decades bordering 1800 were the heyday for bandits and river pirates. So bad they became that Governor Claiborne offered large rewards for their capture. Most of the leaders were caught, tried, convicted and hung, and their followers left the territory or turned to occupations less profitable but easier on their necks. No more famous place on the river existed than Natchez-Under-the-Hill, which was destroyed by tornado May 7, 1840. "Black Legs" were gangs of river men who worked on steamboats and flatboats in the early days, gambling, robbing and committing murder. One of their headquarters was Natchez-Under-the-Hill. Here was a gamblers' rendezvous, with no limit to stakes for which they might play. Here were liquor, women of varied hues, ages and dispositions, but of one reputation.

We landed about eleven; the ferries *Ohio*, *El Capitan* and *El Capitan II* and the *John Evans* and *Florence Eddy*, and several smaller craft were at the levee. Natchez remaining under the hill was unpicturesque. A dowdy, dingy, waterfront is all that is left. Several blocks along several streets have been carried away, a racetrack has been swept down the river, gambling houses, halls of drinking and carousing, the hungry stream has consumed them all. Only the poorest persons live in the few remaining blocks of Natchez-Under-the-Hill.

In the boiling sun we toiled up the long hill to the top of the bluffs. Sitting for weeks in the canoe, our legs were unaccustomed to hills and to long walks. In early afternoon we called upon A. N. Learned. He gave up business for the afternoon, and took us driving. We saw everything of importance in the city and nearby countryside, old plantation homes, private graveyards, haunted houses, the river from the bluffs. The cotton compress was operated for us. We visited Mr. Learned's early home, a plantation "Under the Hill," upriver from the city. Mr. Learned met this northern "invasion"

---

## WE ARE SADLY MISJUDGED

---

with friendliness that clinched the attachment we already had for the south.

The view from Natchez' bluffs is the last one from an "Inspiration Point" on the river. Below here there is no great height from which we may look down upon the stream, though there are low bluffs on the east bank at Ellis Cliffs, Fort Adams, Tunica, St. Francis and Port Hickey and Scot Bluffs. We could look far up and down, and across the river to Vidalia and the Louisiana lands beyond. Concordia, one of the original twelve created by the Territorial Council December 4, 1804, was made a parish in 1807, thirteenth in the state. It was named for Fort Concord, at the site of what is now Vidalia. From here we could look across the narrow neck of Cowpen Point to Giles Bend where we had been early in the morning. In high water from the pilot house of one boat the pilot can look across the neck and see the tops of steamboats coming along the river, less than a mile across and fifteen around.

At six o'clock we headed the canoe southward. The made land of the Mississippi, averaging sixty miles wide, is narrowest at Helena and Natchez and widest at the mouth of the Arkansas. Whatever land the river may once have made at Natchez it has unmade on the east bank of the river, where for several miles it skirts the bluffs. Days were growing shorter; the sky this evening was overcast with clouds. We chose the first suitable landing, Natchez Island Towhead, from where, as we pulled up at dark, six miles upriver we could see lights of the city. Our distance this day was only thirty miles, but we had seen Natchez, learned more of the southland, gained new impressions of the mighty valley.

Just as we were preparing camp, out of the darkness we heard, angrily, "Hi, there, you black niggers, come down off'n that bar. I reckon this is the last time you'll try stealin' hogs. You're going t'get something now you'll remember the rest of your lives."

We stood immovable. The voice came again, "Come on down yere, I tall ya. If ya don't, I'll take a shot at ya."

Out of the darkness there emerged a farmer, carrying a shot gun. He stalked up and peered into our faces quizzically.

"Where I come from," I said as firmly as I could with a

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

shot gun under my nose, "we kill people for calling us 'niggers'."

The man stared into my face, went to Allen and stared at him. It dawned upon him that he had made a mistake. He was profuse in his apologies, as contrite, servile a person as we have ever met. From a swaggering pursuer of negroes, he changed into an apologetic, obsequious soul. There burst forth a flood of elucidations. Negroes had been stealing his hogs. About an hour before, several of his choicest hogs had disappeared. He had heard sounds indicating their captors had started upriver in a rowboat. He had chugged after them in his little gasboat, determined to catch the culprits. In the faint afterglow that comes briefly just when it starts to grow dark, he had seen our silhouettes. Taking it for granted that we were the negro thieves, waiting until dark, intending to then steal up to Natchez and sell the hogs, he ran his engine onto the lower end of the towhead and stalked up the bar.

We forgave him, and after he had gone, we sat and looked at ourselves in the darkness and laughed. We had been taken for almost everything since the trip began, for prohibition and narcotic agents, detectives, ministers, travelling salesmen, missionaries, advertising representatives, artists, photographers, housebreakers, fishermen, actors, religious fanatics, bootleggers, and now, hog stealers. In the dark, ten feet apart either might have suspected the other of being a negro. That far away the hair was not distinguishable, the features not plain, the coloring startlingly African.

While we ate and talked, the full moon rose over the eastern horizon, making a bridge of gold, across which we might walk to the Mississippi shore, beyond which lay the black of night, the source of unknown wonders and joys. The moon was as full as the proverbial dinner pail promised by candidates for office. The day had been hot, 98 degrees. Now it was evening: a cool breeze sported along the silent, secretive stream, making the world peaceful and pleasant. We could see far-off shore signs, lighting the path for "ships that pass in the night, and speak one another in passing."

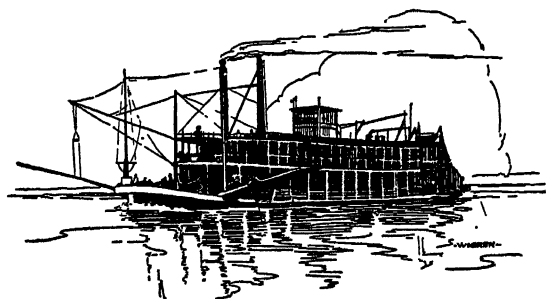
We thought of the fabulous tales told about the river in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, stories of wild monsters,

---

## SLEEP—AND A FULL MOON

---

of pits into which fell all who sought it, of lurking dangers along the banks, fevers, mists and damps, whirlpools and eddies. It was indeed a fabulous river then. It still is a fabulous river. Century-old stories and legends linger in the minds of those who love it. The world changes, but the river is the same. The moonlight upon it is unchanged. The sun gleaming on its tawny tide is as it has ever been. Only people change. Men and women come and go; the river flows on. Thinking of the boundless energy, of the remote unconquerable rivulets from whence it springs, seeing through dreams the infant utmost sources, the shaded rocks at the headwaters, mosses laden with dew at dawn, sand-bottomed pools in the far north, we fell asleep. The full moon smiled in our faces. The sun had sapped our energy: the moon was sending it back to us. At peace with our river-world, we slept.



*The "John D. Grace," a lower river steamboat.*



## CHAPTER XXVII

*We breakfast on the "Thomas R. Buckham";  
Moonlight Minstrelsy; Escape from  
car ferry; Old River.*

**A**T THREE-THIRTY a Mississippi-Warrior towboat with barges passed upstream, the engines sending through the waters rhythmic sounds, lights answering the friendly shoresigns at river's edge. Four o'clock September 4 found us on the river, an hour too early, even for us. No snake charmer ever hypnotized his snakes more truly than this river had enchanted us. Six miles below Ellis Cliffs, Captain John E. Mackin, of the *Thomas R. Buckham*, a steamboat that hauls logs to Natchez for the National Box Company, invited us to breakfast. The boat was tied up at Glasscock Towhead, one of the largest towheads on the river, fifteen miles below Natchez Island Towhead.

For a long time we talked with the genial captain about river days of yore. By now we had learned that while it is unkind to call rivermen liars, it is unwise for one loving facts to believe their tales. We were not hopeless agnostics, but were skeptical: we applied huge doses of salt when their artful romancing concerned their own experiences. Captain Mackin had read my articles in the *Times-Picayune* and was watching for us. He told us about the high water of 1922 when nearly 2,000 men worked on the levee near Natchez to prevent a break. "White lightning" was served in any amounts desired: stills ran full blast. No prohibition agents visited the place either, Captain Mackin said. If they had, they would have been put to work, enough to keep them away.

Twenty miles below Natchez, two centuries ago lay the town of the Taensas tribe. Eight o'clock saw us again on the languorous stream, and at ten we passed the *Uncle Oliver*, a packet running between New Orleans and Vicksburg, one of the few packets still in service. It sent a cheery whistle, and Captain Bradford shouted words of encouragement. Fifteen

---

## CONSTRUCTION CAMP

---

miles below breakfast we rounded Dead Man's Bend, thirty-five miles downstream from Natchez. When Natchez-Under-the-Hill had its French, Spanish and American adventurers, men oftentimes disappeared. As they rounded this bend, their bodies invariably came to the surface, mute evidence of some story that never would be told. Dead men tell no tales!

Not far below Dead Man's Bend, we stopped for water at a levee construction camp opposite Jackson Point. There were only four white men in camp, no white women. The crew was black; negro girls cooked and served. We were surprised at the splendid sleeping quarters, cots, mosquito netting, large, airy tents, and the care to insure pure water and food. Northern construction camps are no better fitted than this one where negro laborers worked to strengthen the dikes to keep the river within due bounds in flood seasons.

Where we nooned on Union Point, from one-thirty to four o'clock September 4, thirty-eight miles below Natchez Island Towhead, it was only three miles across country to Red River. Within sight downstream was Homochitto Cut-off, made in 1777. Across was Adams county established in 1799 and named for President John Adams.

About seven-thirty, as it was getting too dark to distinguish land from water more than a few yards away, we pulled up on Point Breeze. Just above here in 1922 an opening in the levee eight miles long carried into Old River and the Atchafalaya an estimated 317,312 cubic-second-feet, relieving the flooded Mississippi and saving New Orleans from a flood. We were two miles from the site of Fort Adams, and seven miles from the mouth of Old River.

Fort Adams lay sixty river miles below Natchez in Wilkinson county, the last in Mississippi on the river, on the line of the thirty-first parallel, once southern boundary of the United States on the Mississippi. The French called it "Roche a Davion" for Father Davion who established a mission here in 1698. The fort was built in 1798 and 1799 and named for John Adams. Wilkinson county was established January 30, 1802, named for General James Wilkinson, who built the fort. Below here all land on the west side drains away from the Mississippi to the Gulf by shorter channels.

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

From Natchez Island Towhead to Point Breeze, it was fifty-three miles. We could afford to rest a bit. A good paddle was behind us, several miles would yet be accomplished. During the two and one-half hour rest, we dined and napped: at ten o'clock we returned to the river. Some scientist says that stretching is an instinctive action to accelerate the circulation. We stretched for the sheer joy of bodily pleasure, the feel of backs, legs and arms now so thoroughly trained that they were conscious of a physical glory at movement.

The night-blue heaven, unpopulated at first, showed one star which performed a solo dance until a rival appeared. More stars added lustre: none was dimmed by the addition of millions. The sensible thing for us to have done was to have remained on Point Breeze. But the moon was full, life was made for action; romance was not to lay ensconced in safety when a winding river called. Lights sparkled above: thrills unknown to millions awaited. Anything is reasonable if it agrees with one's ideas of what ought to be reasonable: a moonlight paddle on the great stream agreed with ours.

As the moon rolled over the black, low bluff, showering light on the river, we pushed off. A few feet from shore we were severed from reality. Nothing existed except the canoe, its occupants, and the moon, quivering on the broad bosom of the stream. We sat entranced in a blackrimmed bowl of molten gold, moving easily in the evening breeze, which was just strong enough to make us conscious of its whisperings. We only begin to know how to live when we suddenly realize we must learn how to die. Here indeed was the place and the time: one knowing the beauty of this golden river in full moon, swinging around a bend in its majesty, peace and power, has found enough to have made life worth the struggle. Ordinarily paddles are necessary appurtenances to a canoe: tonight they were magic wands, sparkling in the moonlight of our southern moon. Too often we honor the opinions of others in our efforts to be tolerant, without seeking to learn the truth. Out here, we saw truth, truth about life, happiness, everything, even death, and all was beautiful.

Everything at night is deceptive, everything keen. Nerves are atingle: the breath comes in slightly audible inhalations.

---

## NIGHT RIVER WITCHERY

---

The banks of the river are higher, senses more alert, sounds plainer. The bark of a dog carries an unbelievable distance. Birds, chirping sleepily in trees along the banks, are heard over the waters. What facts to confound fiction had we on these floods, more mysterious than the tales of Arabian nights, more opulent than the gold of conquistadores, more adventurous than the dreams of a thousand chroniclers. Night, with a glorious coiffure, sat luminous, smiling over the earth. And of it all we were an integral part. Even to us at times, the Mississippi was a sad, sombre stream. Not this night. It was radiant as new life, glorious as the visions of the saints. No person or force could compete with the moon-spell of this river. As the moon grew and strengthened, in its course up the heavens, it became a crinkly gold ribbon, tying us to shore. Aladdin with his wonderful lamp had made a wish. King Midas had bathed his hands in our river. We paddled on, propelling our fantastic shadows and an extra canoe over the waters.

Floating across the waters, primitive, plaintive, with the indefinable call of the unknowing to the unknown, came a song. Never have I heard such inexpressibly beautiful, such euphonious notes, such weird, haunting melodies. The negroes in a cabin or church behind the levee were uttering in their songs more than words, more than music. They were appealing to an all-wise and all-seeing Judge, expressing in these harmonies thoughts too sacred for phrases, feelings for which there is no language. There was not only an exotic timber in these sounds drifting across the river: there was a verity, a plea, a caress: there was a beauty, a sweetness nurtured in the breasts of mothers of a long oppressed race. There was in these strains the measured tread of time, the whisperings of distant dreams, the call of the low-pitched inexplicable voice of God. Only those who have felt the eloquent silence of night in lonely places could understand.

We dared not paddle, dared not move. We feared nothing but that we should miss a note. The spectral banks loomed vaguely afar. The canoe drifted unguided, its occupants enchanted. A moment before it had been our world: now we were blended into another life. We had heard negroes sing before, have heard them since then. But always there shall live in my

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

memory one night when, below Point Breeze on Fort Adams Reach, I heard expressed the longing of all people of all times for a glimpse into the meaning of the world, heard it in the deep red notes of harmonious-voiced negroes behind the levee. Such soulful rhythms, such ineffable beauty, wafted by winds on romance-laden air, I do not again expect to hear.

The night, the blue-black sky fretted with stars seen dimly overhead; the southern moon, mellowing the world with its golden wisdom; the river, with its silent vastness, shore lights, chanting, murmurings, whisperings, echoing the harmonies of the valley; the lilting breeze, filtering by with the gentleness of evening hours; entranced us, and we drifted enthralled toward salty seas. Here was romance of the occult east, spell-binding moonlight of Venice, voluptuous blue of sky canopying waves that wash a coral reef, sun splashed forest edges, soft southern lights and shades, a river uncoiling its way in wonder toward tides and stormy shores of the Mexican Gulf. Drifting slowly onward, resting gently on the broad bosom of the Father of Waters, we were enslaved by the sounds. Gradually the music died, the current carried us farther, farther away, until only in our imaginations could we hear faint, faroff, plaintive harmonies. A jungle might have bordered these waters, our craft floating on a tropical river alive with mysteries beyond the ken of whites or civilization. We felt in touch with past ages, in communication with lost feelings, awed by the vastness of the scheme of the things that are.

A strange thing loomed in the dark. It had lights. It made a noise. It puffed, snorted, clanked and clanged. I struck a match: our flashlights were burned out. If our watches were right and our paddling about normal, we were near Shreve's Cut-off, at the mouth of Old River, or, as our school textbooks taught us, the mouth of Red River. Coming at us was a terrible mass, an enormous hulk. A gong sounded. It was a car transfer!

Lights from a solitary houseboat gleamed brightly on our left. For a moment how we longed to be there. We turned our course, not knowing whither the car transfer was bound. We drew nearer. The waters seemed to be tearing upstream at a terrific speed while we remained still. We backed water,

---

## DANGER IN THE DARK

---

nervous, chilled, at the sight of the great form drawing nearer, looming over us, in front of us, towering high. The sound of the wash of the current, aggravated by our backing water, was far worse than by daylight.

A bell clanged. There were shouts, sounds of engines thrown into reverse, backing water. A light flashed. Sound of iron grating and a chain rattling in the black night. Muttered oaths! From high above came a stream of epithets. We slipped by the bow, so close that had we not been paddling feverishly, we could have touched it.

A moment of silence. "Guess it's sunk, whatever it was." Another voice. "Current'll bring'em up some miles below." We shivered at the callous remark. "Don't be so damned hardboiled," said a third voice. The current carried us downstream: voices faded: the car transfer receded into darkness, with its lights, which flickered and disappeared. And far over on our right was the mouth of Old River, go-between of the Red River of the South and the Mississippi.

We were on Shreve's Cut-off, made in 1831, named for Henry M. Shreve, a young engineer who broke the Fulton-Livingston monopoly on steamboats on the Mississippi, made inventions and gave them to his fellow man without patent, and greatly stimulated steamboating on the lower Mississippi. Shreve invented and built a snag-boat in 1834, pulled dangerous obstructions from the river and made navigation safer.

Our adventure with the car transfer happened near where De Soto was buried in the dead of night, May 21, 1542, at Guachoya on the Mississippi River. Later, on a trip up the Ouachita River, with Captain L. V. Cooley, owner of the *Ouachita*, the man "who knows everything about the lower river and its history," we learned that the Mississippi no longer flows past the site of De Soto's burial. Shreve's Cut-off, at the lower end of Fort Adams Reach, creating Turnbull Island and Upper and Lower Old River, took the Mississippi away from the scene of the conquistadore's burial. Now Red River, en route to join the Atchafalaya, flows past the spot.

De Soto died, giving his soul to God in whose name he had committed so many acts of cruelty, believing that his salvation and that of others, lay only through his church. Whatever else

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

may be said of De Soto, and there are many who consider him ruthless, cruel and despotic, no avaricious taint has been attached to his name. Of all the men who pass in the parade of American discovery, none excells him in prudence, generalship, audacious courage, inspired valour. He founded no colony, discovered no secret of youth, carried no wealth home to king and church. He was harsh in his judgments, intolerant and bigoted. But he was cast of the metal and in the mould from which heroes are made: he suffered, endured, and when his day came, he laid himself down with fortitude and humility, uncrushed by the fortunes of this world, unharassed by doubts over the life to come.

We passed the mouth of Old River, commonly known and erroneously so, save when water is high in the Red and low in the Father of Waters, as the mouth of Red River. Most of the year some of the Mississippi flows through Old River, discharging a few miles away into the Atchafalaya.

Through Old River several Louisiana streams still send lumber, hogs, cotton, and receive groceries and supplies: steamboats ascend the Ouachita, Red, Black, and, in high water, even smaller rivers. Sugar is taken at points along the coast below Red River. Excursion boats still ply, and on Mardi Gras trips hundreds come by boat each year. Barges are increasing in size and numbers.

We had nearly found our resting places within a few miles of that of De Soto. We passed Angola, on our left in West Feliciana parish, Spanish for "Happy Land." On our right was Pointe Coupee parish, established in 1807, French for "Small Cut." According to M. le Page du Pratz, architect and engineer of the West India Company, Pointe Coupee is named because the Mississippi there made an elbow. This doubtless was what is now Fausse River, created by the Fausse River Cut-off in 1722. Before that time two travelers were coming down the Mississippi. At this point surf beating against the current made it impossible for them to go on. While waiting for the wind to go down, one of the men took a walk. Chance directed him across the narrow neck over low land, which soon brought him to the river again, which had returned to this point after a twenty-mile circle. Returning to his companion, they

---

## *SLEEP—NEAR CONVICTS*

---

dragged their boat across the low country, digging a channel in places where there was some water, giving the river freer reign to cut its way across the point shortly after.

It was after midnight. We were tired. We went ashore on the Louisiana State Convict Farm. We crawled up on the sandbar quietly and made camp. We did not want any guard to suspect us of being escaped negro prisoners. We left the river at twelve-fifteen and soon were wrapped in blankets and slumber. In spite of slack current, heat, humidity, behind us was a sixty-three mile day. Our camp this night was on Raccourci Cut-off, made in 1848, the last good camp, save one, between Old River and the Gulf.



## CHAPTER XXVIII

*We feel the effects of the heat; Captain Cooley  
and old steamboat days; Baton Rouge;  
Point Clair ants!*



H! THE biting, blistering heat, the humid heat, even at night! By five-thirty, September fifth, we were on the water, still tired from the heat of the previous day, from the feverish sun and festering air which sapped our strength. We noticed at once a change in the character of the river. There is less sweeping circuitousness between Old River and the Gulf than above to Cape Girardeau. The banks are more regular, the channel deeper. On both sides from here to the Gulf is Louisiana. We breakfasted as *The Charles H. Curley of St. Paul* drifted on Iowa Point, less than three hundred miles from our goal. It did begin to seem as though we were getting somewhere. Below here we have a glorious river, never less than half a mile wide, with a minimum depth of fifty feet, and a volume which reaches the awesome magnitude of two and one-half million tons of water flowing by a given point every minute. At times the waters carry one thousand tons of sediment a minute.

Below here we were in the sugar country. Sugar was first introduced into Louisiana by the Jesuit fathers in 1751, but not until 1794 or 1795 did Etienne de Bore make the first commercial crop of sugar.

It was a loggy, lazy day. We lacked ambition yet were not sick. The thermometer registered ninety-six degrees, but we had paddled in hotter weather. We were weighted down: humidity accentuated the heat. The sun seemed to draw the strength out through our finger tips, leaving us weak and flaccid. Passing Morganza Crevasse, we sought shelter at eleven-thirty, happy to be out of the enervating sun. The *Destrehan* passed, upstream bound. We remained still, but got no rest. All that we did was to escape a sunstroke. At four we returned, tired as though we had done sixty miles.

---

## STORIES OF EARLY DAYS

---

Thirty miles below Old River, late in the day, after having fought all day against hot winds, we passed Bayou Sara, on the east bank, opposite Pointe Coupee. Bayou Sara was a famous early point of call, known to all steamboatmen who plied the lower river. This stretch near Bayou Sara once supported many aristocratic planters.

After completing the canoe trip, I took a steamboat journey up the Mississippi, Old, Atchafalaya, Red, Black and Ouachita rivers on the *Ouachita*, with Captain L. V. Cooley. Near Bayou Sara we first saw the *Ouachita*, steaming upstream. From Captain Cooley I heard many tales about the river. He told me of rate wars, efforts of the "big boys" to freeze out the "little fellows," of days when freight and passenger prices were so low that it was cheaper to travel than to stay at home. The channel now is like a lighted city street, compared with two or three generations ago, when there were no shore lights, no searchlights, when banks caved and left trees just below the surface, awaiting the steamboat, when sandbars suddenly shifted and there was no way to keep track of the channel. Then a pilot took a steamboat up a tortuous, black stream without a light. If he could not see or hear his way, he had to feel it.

Captain Cooley's memory ran back decades before I was born. He spoke of the days of coroneted chimneys, gilded mirrors, white scroll-work, of steamboat races, of huge crowds, of packets loaded to the guards, of Mardi Gras trips, of the firing of the cannon when the boats left New Orleans. He gave as reasons for the decline of steamboating: exhaustion of the lumber trade along the river; inroads of trucks, especially into the packet business; building of railroad spurs into factory yards; changing transportation routes and growth of the branch factory system. While Captain Cooley loved all steamboats, his heart was bound up in "The great Bends steamer *America*."

And we heard about smokestacks. Those years after the war were decades of smokestacks. Captain Sam W. Cotton, first mate on the *Ouachita*, said the *James Howard*, one of the great boats about 1874, had stacks rising one hundred and four feet, and those of the *Great Republic* towered still higher. "Why," explained Captain Sam, "The moon had difficulty

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

getting past them. Had the growth of steamboats continued, with their longer and larger bodies and their taller smokestacks, it would have been necessary to put an embargo on the moon, or else to have run only on cloudy nights."

In our quest to learn "Where Goes The River," we pressed on, to Fancy Point on the east bank on Fausse River Cut-off, seven miles below Bayou Sara, where we pulled up about seventhy, two miles as the bird flies, west of Port Hudson. We slept in West Feliciana parish, home of the Tunica hills, the "toe" of the Appalachians.

We took the most sandy location we could find: mud spots surrounded us. It was too dark to return to the river to search a new place: the car transfer was still too fresh in our minds for us to wish to. We turned in after a hurried meal, with only thirty miles behind us for the day. Baton Rouge was our goal in the morning, twenty-eight miles away. The night was the most troubled since leaving St. Louis. The mosquitoes were positive pests. All night long they hummed drowsily, too fatigued to make a concentrated attack, but active enough to conduct guerilla warfare, with numerous skirmishes, sufficiently disastrous to their numbers and our tempers to inspire Allen to new invectives. By three o'clock we had had enough. We built a fire. With the weird lights silhouetting everything, we loaded the canoe: at three-twenty we were on the river. The moon was up: with the help of it and the shorelights, we progressed. All this week the moon aided us after we began our morning paddle, remaining visible until seven o'clock.

Pausing in our flight precipitate, we breakfasted below Profit Island, floating on Springfield Bend, from six to seven. Allen prepared the meal, setting things out on the canvas cover which served as a table. There is no more charming method of eating than in a canoe, rocked easily on a river awakening for the day. The current had perceptibly lessened since passing Old River mouth, the river contracted. We made almost no headway when we were not paddling. An hour after breakfast we rounded Thomas Point, from where we saw Scot Bluffs, five miles below which was Baton Rouge. Off Scot Bluffs, a low range of gentle palisades, we began to prepare for Baton Rouge, taking turns with our ablutions, shaving and dressing.

---

## ALLEN SEES OCEAN VESSELS

---

Before ten o'clock, in spite of our holiday scrupulosity, we were ready to assail the city.

Allen had never before seen an ocean-going vessel. The first was above Baton Rouge, the *Matinicock*, lying at the Standard Oil dock. I had seen ships at both coasts, but never was so thrilled as on this day. We had seen the river as an infant, scarcely large enough to float a canoe. Here were deep sea ships drawing thirty feet. After the *Matinicock*, we passed the *Durango*, *Robolo* of Tampico, *Istrouma* of Baltimore, *Slack Barrett* of Cincinnati, and the *Sprague* of Pittsburgh, called the largest steamboat on the Mississippi.

Some few leagues above Baton Rouge, the river assumes a more majestic look. At Baton Rouge, we leave high land behind us and our course to the Gulf is through land lower than the level of the river's floods. Below Baton Rouge we pursued for two hundred and fifty miles to Head of Passes, a river much deeper and narrower, a river that follows the same bed in which it has lain for centuries. It no longer wastes its energy running all over the valley, forming vast sandbars, taking breakneck curves, making shallow crossings, rapidly cutting banks. The current flows more slowly, with great force and power.

Paddling slowly in the rapidly increasing heat, we saw a building towering over others. It resembled an old fortress, some foreign structure. It was the capitol of Louisiana. Tenthirty found us tied up at Baton Rouge. Across the river was Port Allen and West Baton Rouge, in West Baton Rouge parish. Baton Rouge parish was established in 1807, and divided into two parishes in 1810. The word means "Red Stick." We were in East Baton Rouge parish.

The thermometer mounted to 100 degrees this lazy Sunday afternoon, September 6, but we found Baton Rouge charming: surely the test of any place is when the thermometer is running wild. We strolled through the old campus of Louisiana State University, with its barracks, old buildings, walks and shady spots.

After five o'clock we left Baton Rouge, seeking a place to spend the night. One man who knew the outdoors said there was only one more place really fit for a camp. He described it

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

so accurately that we found it even in the pitch dark, after seven o'clock. It was on Duncan's or Conrad's Point on Missouri Bend, eight miles below Baton Rouge.

Our evening meal was enlivened by the passage of two Mississippi-Warrior barges. As they approached, we stood on the river edge and waved coats. The searchlight flashed upon us, and the pilot wig-wagged it in recognition, then gave us a salute with his whistle. Someone called out through a megaphone far across the river, "Hi, there, Charles H. Curley and crew." Thirty-five miles and a visit to Baton Rouge this day had given us, and at night a splendid bed in the warm sandbar. This night, with the day so hot that the thermometer passed one hundred degrees in several southern cities, was so hot in these cities that persons could not sleep. We were comfortable under two blankets.

"Came the dawn and laughed the paddlers," as the moving picture subtitles read. It was Monday, September 7, Labor Day. We resolved to lie abed late, to celebrate with a late start, and to camp early. The sun peered over the horizon at five o'clock. Allen awakened, peeked out of one eye, and was similarly greeted. We settled down into the blankets. Around us a heavy dew had fallen and was glistening on the sandbar. The river had begun to lose its tawny hue and was becoming clearer. By five-thirty we were restless. We had sworn by Helen of Troy to stay in bed until eight o'clock. At six, off went the top blanket, leaving only light army blankets. They became hot: and off they went. In our pajamas we lay and let the sun dig its rays into us. At six-thirty we looked at the clock, jumped up and bets were off. Breakfast, then into the canoe went everything, even they who had resolved to stay in bed at least until eight o'clock.

When Iberville, Bienville and a party of French ascended the Mississippi on a trip of exploration, Indian guides showed them a passage from the river into what is now Lake Maurepas. It was Bayou Manchac, forty leagues above New Orleans. Lake Maurepas empties into Lake Pontchartrain, then called Ascantia. This expedition ascended the river to the village of the Houmas. Iberville returned through Bayou Manchac. He described the mosquitoes as "those terrible little animals."

---

## PRICE OF ROLLS GOES UP

---

Bayou Manchac was the chief route for Indians along the Mississippi to the French settlement at Biloxi.

When Louisiana was admitted to the Union in 1812, a system of levees extended on the east bank to Bayou Manchac, one hundred and twenty miles above Canal Street in New Orleans. On the west bank, dikes reached to Pointe Coupee, fifty miles farther. Below here all land on our left drains away from the river into Lake Maurepas, Lake Pontchartrain and other bays and bayous. Along in here we first noticed gasoline engines, chugging away at the river edge, pumping water over the levees into the fields to irrigate them. We were now well into the sugar coast, which runs from Old River almost to New Orleans.

As we reached Plaquemine shortly before noon, twenty-one miles below Baton Rouge, the *Tensas* of the Mississippi River Commission, steamed out of Plaquemine lock. This was put in to keep the Mississippi from draining down Bayou Plaquemine and overflowing the hinterland. Our late start and leisurely paddling had given us meager mileage, but we determined to stop, breakfast, inspect the lock, visit the town, and avoid some of the heat. Plaquemine is the most French town either of us had ever visited. In parts of Chicago, San Francisco and New York I had heard more French than English, but this little city was much more French in attitude, manner and speech. Here I committed a *faux pas*, in spite of my Scotch ancestry. I was purchasing a dozen rolls at the bakery. I inquired the price.

"Twenty cents?" I replied to the answer.

"Five cents," the old French lady answered.

"Only five cents a dozen?" I gasped. Now I am worrying over having been the cause of raising the price of rolls in Plaquemine. An hour later when we walked past the shop, a new sign stood in the window, "Rolls—10c a dozen."

Plaquemine is French for "Persimmon," a tree that formerly grew abundantly here. It is parish seat of Iberville parish, which runs on both sides of the river and was established in January 1807, named for the founder of Louisiana. It was the first day of school in Plaquemine; we saw no crepe, but the children looked appropriately mournful. We wandered

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

beside Bayou Plaquemine, which leads to the Gulf of Mexico via the Atchafalaya River, one hundred miles shorter than via New Orleans, an excellent route for small steamboats and light draft craft. We walked about the town, intensely hot even in September, but behind flowered protections, houses looked cool. At one o'clock we reembarked.

On we went until a mile above Bayou Goula we stopped at four o'clock for an hour's rest. Rounding Point Clair, we were caught in the darkness. The most hideous night of our lives followed. Night swooped down on us suddenly. By six o'clock, with heavy clouds aiding the hour, it was dark. We paddled as close to shore as we dared, fearing that a log or protruding stump might end our trip. We crossed to the east bank, skirted it, then ran ashore and encamped opposite the Old Hickory and Celeste plantations on what once was Indian Camp plantation. Woe was us! Had we known that we were camping on ground of the United States Marine Hospital Number 66, otherwise known as the National Leprosarium at Carville, worry would have been added to our woe. By sheer accident we bivouaked on the grounds of the only United States leprosarium in this country. Our visitors, however, caused us enough physical discomfort and mental anguish to last us many long nights.

We mounted a slender palisade and surveyed the land in the dark. We guided the canoe downstream a few yards until we found a place where we could slide it onto the mud bank. The bank in several steps was dried, the lower part kept moist by waves of wind and passing vessels. We had paddled only thirty miles this day, but we had gone too far. Allen unloaded the canoe and built a fire; I explored, finding nothing but firewood, a nest of sleepy birds and a levee. Across the river shore lights blinked wisely; they knew what awaited us. Dinner was a joy; a fire and hot food as evening dews and damps began to descend. In good spirits we prepared for bed, unworried over mileage; we had another week in which to make the remaining two hundred.

Soon after we snuggled into bed we stirred restlessly. It seemed as though sand had gotten into the blankets. We shook them thoroughly, then settled again. For a few minutes

---

## UNINVITED MIDNIGHT VISITORS

---

all was serene. Suddenly I heard a Comanche Indian yell that shook the earth and disturbed the heavens. I arose as though pulled by the hair. Allen was waving his blankets and grabbing his back, arms, and legs. Had he not been with me constantly for days I would have sworn he had delirium tremens. Next he appeared to be wig-wagging Mars, but he was addressing another region. I moved uneasily, then began to emulate Allen's physical and mental gymnastics.

Ants! Never have I met such tenacious opponents. More grim than a chaperone, more determined than a bill collector, more ferocious than a musical comedy general, they had a bite like a bulldog, a sting like a wasp, a kick like a mule. I am willing to back one Point Clair ant against a dozen mosquitoes and give odds. They were the most vicious adversaries we ever had encountered. We stripped, rubbed ourselves with grease. This only encouraged them, giving them dessert with a full course dinner. We built a smudge; they thought it was incense. We swung our arms and kicked our legs, but the ants loved the wild ride in the star-sprinkled night. We shook out our blankets again and again, but if we dislodged them, they crawled back immediately. In the canoe for ten minutes I had comparative comfort, though I had so many sore spots I could not tell whether they were old wounds or whether the ants were biting me again. But even the canoe became an ant auditorium. The night wore on. We got up and sat by the fire, nodding or scratching or slapping or conjuring up new curses upon all ants of all kinds of all lands of all times.

And as we battled armies of assailants through the night, squirming and twisting, we took turns growling from time to time:

"Ain't Nature Grand!"



## CHAPTER XXIX

*Donaldsonville and the night at the Convent;  
Mystery, a loaf of bread is missing;  
Hahnville; New Orleans.*



UNABLE to endure the ants any longer, we paced our precarious little ledge, watching stars drop into the river. Two oil tankers, vast, silent, passed "Ant Paradise." Coming downstream heavily loaded, low in the water with few lights, they are difficult to see and dangerous, especially on dark, foggy nights; upstream bound, light, they pop out of the water like cork. Desperate, we dressed, piled things into the canoe and ate, the first time on the trip that we had two meals in the same camp. We passed on the river still dark at five forty-five, the tanker *Motocarline*, Baton Rouge bound.

Rounding Philadelphia Point and Eighty-One Mile Point, we passed the New Orleans packet *John D. Grace*, and came at nine-thirty to Donaldsonville, eighteen miles below Point Clair. On one side of Bayou La Fourche is Port Barrow; on the other Donaldsonville. La Fourche is French for "Two Forks"; the bayou at one place has two openings. Much sugar is raised in Ascension parish, of which this is the seat of government. The parish was created in 1807, named after Ascension Day. Huck Finn said that a bayou was a "one-horse river." Many are scarcely that; many merely relief ditches of nature in high water. Others carry goodly amounts of water and are commercially important.

As we pulled up the canoe at Donaldsonville, a little negro boy called in excitement, "Maman, maman. Lookit two men out on the Mississipp' in a peeroogue."

"In a peeroogue," answered the negro mother. "Jesu! Jesu! What fools are these! Out on the Mississipp' in a peeroogue?"

And the negro mother who had been washing along the banks of the Father of Waters came running to gaze upon us in wonder. In Louisiana a pirogue is a cousin to a canoe. One

---

## THE HEAT HINDERS US

---

native Cajan told us pirogues were so tippy a man could not shift a chew of tobacco from one side of his cheek to the other without upsetting. He was the same one who told us that the mosquitoes were so large that he often had used their wings for sails.

Donaldsonville was clean and white. We ate at Casso's, a little French restaurant, where the proprietor recognized us from pictures, and personally attended to our outrageous wants. At eleven-thirty we returned to our canoe, at the landing of the ferry *Ruth*. An hour later we again were off the river, with an impatient wait necessitated because of the extreme heat of the muggy, sun-stricken waters. We sat in the shade on Point Houmas, and while we discussed the Indians of the name who once lived here, relatives of the Point Clair ants visited us in numbers.

All day we noticed a change in the country through which we were passing. Although we saw Spanish moss above Vicksburg, today was the first time we could distinguish it from the river. The levees are much closer to the stream, within sight almost all the way. They conformed with our ideas of what levees ought to be, with footpaths on top, with benches some places where persons may sit and enjoy whatever breeze there is. Many fine old plantation homes stood in full view. Their great pillars, extending across the fronts and sometimes the sides of the homes, with clusters of smaller buildings nearby, gave an imposing air to most of the estates visible below Baton Rouge.

We returned to the river after two o'clock, paddling along until nearly six. Passing the oil tanker *Caddo* and *Plaquemines* we pulled up at Convent, on the east bank. There the occupants of the *Coleo*, a little gasoline launch of the Higgins Lumber Company, bound on a timber cruising trip up Red River, invited us to be their guests for dinner. We accepted and furnished dessert from a package my sister had sent us.

That night we slept at Huguet's Hotel at Convent, really only the private home of "Papa" and "Mama" Huguet. The little village is named for the Sacred Heart Convent located here. It is in St. James parish, which was established in 1807. We stayed at Huguet's because we had had enough of ants,

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

mud banks and mosquitoes. Our *Coleo* friends promised to watch the outfit, and we retired before nine o'clock so that we could arise before dawn and get an early start. Next morning we took to the water at six o'clock, just daylight; the *Coleo* was chugging upstream. Our outfit appeared intact. We pushed off and passed a few minutes later the *Wanderer II* and tow. We rounded College Point below Convent, named for Jefferson College, which was founded by Governor A. B. Roman, about 1831.



*"Although we saw Spanish moss above Vicksburg, today was the first time we could distinguish it from the river."*

We thought no more of the *Coleo* until we started down Grandview Reach, a dozen miles below Convent, when we got things out for breakfast. A loaf of bread was missing! That is the great mystery of the trip. Who took it? We should like to meet the *Coleo* cruisers; perhaps they could explain. If whoever took just one loaf of bread wanted only one loaf, why did he not ask for it? If he was an occupant of the *Coleo*, why

---

## A LOAF OF BREAD VANISHES

---

did he not leave a note? If it was someone else, why did he not take something of value? The unimportance of the theft made it paramount in interest. In spite of tales of bad men, low characters, river rats, this was all that was lost on the journey.

While we breakfasted, we drifted slowly past Gramercy, where negroes were loading a Mississippi-Warrior barge with sugar. Sugar plantation owners benefit by the revival of through service to St. Louis for their product may be loaded right from the refinery and shipped direct into the heart of the mid-west, at great saving in freight costs. The barge we saw being loaded had a capacity of fifteen thousand tons. While watching them loading, a black woolly negro called out:

"Hi there, y'all takin' that 'air Leviathan down to N'Ahwleens to start a freight or passenger line?"

Noon found us off Bonnet Carre Point. We landed and rested at Lucy until three o'clock, apostrophizing the heat and pondering our loaf of bread. We were not exactly tired, but certainly we had no ambition. The heat, the muggy, sticky, heat, seemed to have sapped our fight and drive. Bonnet Carre is French for "Square Cap," the point being named for a bend in the river here which has the appearance of an odd-shaped cap. It is in St. John the Baptist parish, which was created in 1807.

Half an hour after returning to the river, we passed the site of the Bonnet Carre crevasse, where in 1850 the levee broke on the east side, thirty miles above the gauge at Carrollton, pouring the yellow flood of the Mississippi into Lake Pontchartrain, five miles distant. Nearly one-half of the levees of the Mississippi are in Louisiana, eight hundred and fifty-five miles.

Below Bonnet Carre crevasse we entered St. Charles parish, formed in 1807. We passed the *Glenpool*, a Standard Oil tanker, the *Terrebonne*, and just before leaving the river, the *Houma*, upstream bound. At Hahnville, where we stopped for the night, less than five miles to the east is Lake Pontchartrain.

We pulled up our canoe, fought off mosquitoes and sought refuge thirty miles above New Orleans and thirty-four miles below Convent. We were at Hahnville, named for Michael Hahn, a northerner who was governor of Louisiana during the

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

Civil War. A negro family, old Charley Cambre and his wife, had a large house with a spare room that they sometimes rented to salesmen and travelers. We were happy to find shelter from the mosquitoes.\*‡ As soon as the sun began to drop the pests became worse; such hungry, omniverous beasts we never had met, save the ants at Point Clair.

After the evening meal, at which the old couple carefully administered to our wants, we talked with the Cambres. It was interesting to get the point of view of these elderly negroes, who had lived most of their lives, and who had grandchildren growing up to face problems that will become more acute as time goes on, unless great wisdom is exercised. They had the wisdom of age and the philosophy of members of an inferior race, but they gave us bits of light on life that youth and white man seldom discover. When we talked about the treatment of their race in the south, they expressed the belief that on the whole they were fairly treated. They resented the whites making it impossible for them to have negro doctors, dentists and lawyers in this locality. They believed they were kept down unnecessarily, but during the last two generations could see great improvements. They declared the need of their race is not evangelism or an attempt to establish racial equality, but education of the negro masses, so that they may take their proper place in society through realization of obligations and duties to one another and to the white man. The Cambres wanted more than anything, a reduction of crime among negroes. They were very religious, patient, and full of faith in the wisdom of a good and all-knowing God, who in time rights all things.

Night held us in its grasp. New Orleans, about which we had dreamed, talked, sung for months, we would see on the morrow. We retired to sleep in an old fashioned four-poster, with mosquito netting down the sides. My last memory was of an old negro mammy, carrying a candle, tucking the netting in around the sides to keep out any mosquitoes that might have gotten into the house. "Grandma" Cambre's kindly, black old face, her white hair shining in the yellow glow of the candle, made her a figure out of a book. And—tomorrow—New Orleans!



①

(1) The George M. D. Kelly plantation on the outskirts of Natchez. This is considered one of the finest plantation homes on the river, and is preserved practically as it existed before the war of the states.

(3) The levee at Natchez, showing what remains of the famous Natchez-Under-The-Hill.

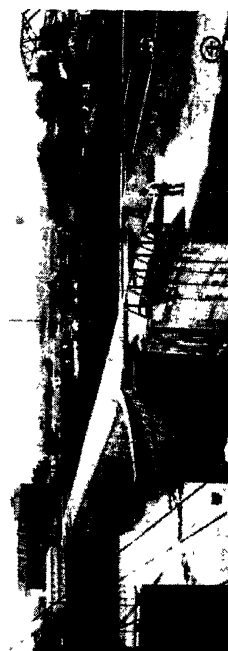


③



②

(2) Looking down the Mississippi River from the Natchez Bluffs.



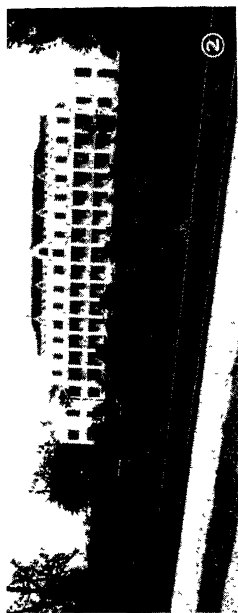
④

(4) The Plaquemine lock, which keeps the Father of Waters from rushing down through Plaquemine Bayou and flooding the hinterland. Aboard the V. J. Kurzweg entering it, many feet above the city.



(1) This plantation house, once several hundred yards from the river, now stands only a few hundred feet. The picture is taken from the top of the levee, near Convent.

(3) Plantation home a few miles from Donaldsonville. The steps admitting the inhabitants to the upstairs rooms probably were an aid to husbands and grown sons when they sometimes stole home in the wee sma' hours.



(2) The Sacred Heart convent at Convent, La., also photographed from the top of the levee. The road which follows the levee fairly closely most of the way from New Orleans to Baton Rouge, is seen in the foreground.

(4) The ferryboat New Orleans, taken at Algiers, one of the two new all-steel ferries plying across the 2,500 yards of the Father of Waters at Canal Street.

---

## THE LOUISIANA PURCHASE

---

In 1519 Alvarez de Pineda, coasting the Gulf of Mexico, entered the mouth of a great river, which historians believe to have been the Mississippi. Pineda called it the *Espiritu Santo*, "River of the Holy Spirit." He probably is the first white person who saw land now part of Louisiana. Louisiana was named by La Salle in 1682 in honor of Louis XIV, King of France. The name applied vaguely to the region lying between the Rocky and Alleghany Mountains, Great Lakes and Gulf of Mexico, with an area of 1,244,000 square miles. Iberville, founder of Louisiana, planted the first permanent colony in what was then Louisiana at Biloxi, which now is in Mississippi, in 1699.

To save it from the fate of Canada, which was lost to the British, the king of France ceded Louisiana to his kinsman, Charles II of Spain at Fontainebleau, November 3, 1762. Under the skillful Minister Talleyrand at the Treaty of Ildefonso, October 1, 1800, Napoleon regained possession of Louisiana. This news did not reach the colony. James Monroe and Robert Livingston, acting for Jefferson, for \$15,000,000 secured the cession of all of Louisiana including New Orleans, at the treaty signed in Paris, April 30, 1803. November 30, 1803, M. Laussat received Louisiana from Governor Salcedo and Casa Calvo, ending the thirty-four years of rule under Spain. December 20, 1803, for the third time within the memory of the generation then alive, Louisiana changed hands. William C. C. Claiborne, governor of Mississippi, and General Wilkinson, took possession of the province for the United States.

What an empire was acquired, bounded on the north by Canada, on the south by the Gulf of Mexico, on the east by the great river, and west by the Rocky Mountains and Sabine River! The effects of the purchase on the United States are incalculable. It resulted in the inevitable urge to annex Texas and caused the Mexican War, made the acquisition of Florida a necessity. It brought us to the Rockies, across which lay California and the coast. It helped develop the idea of manifest destiny. It added more slaveholding lands to the nation and made the struggle for balance of power between free and slave states so great as to cause war. It was the greatest real estate



---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

deal in history, an empire bought for two cents for each one hundred acres.

Louisiana was admitted as a state April 30, 1812, shortly before Congress declared war on England, June 18, 1812. January 26, 1861, Louisiana passed the Ordinance of Secession, and in the spring of 1862 Union forces captured New Orleans and held it during the war.

Louisiana, the pearl of the southern tier of states, Florida publicity notwithstanding, possesses the largest amount of alluvium in the valley: nearly one-third of the state is alluvial. It contains nearly one-half of the overflow lands of the Mississippi Valley. Most geologists agree that at one time a broad estuary extended as far inland as the Ohio mouth. Mud and silt for centuries were washed into this arm of the sea from the high lands above, and, floating toward the sea, deposited, filling in the country until this stratum of silt entirely occupied the Mississippi bottoms. Then a great continental upheaval took place and the river had to wash out a new channel to the sea. It poured through the easily dissolved silt and swept much of its former bed to salt water.

At four-thirty an aged figure crept into our room and asked us if we still wanted to get to New Orleans this day. When we replied that we did, he said he was afraid in that case we would have to get up. Just as chickens were chanticleering the sun's expected arrival, we walked in the dark along the deserted Hahnville street, a road running behind the levee, slapping mosquitoes with our bandanas, and trying to arouse as few dogs as possible. Our host had said that he thought it "pow'fully early": as we paddled out onto the river at five o'clock, a still murky, oil-hued stream running between bizarre banks, and started down the lonesome, silent lane, we agreed.

On this day we were to see New Orleans. What else did we need to give strength to our arms and determination to our spirits? In spite of days of opposition from this miscreant, truculent stream, today we would reach New Orleans. Two miles below our starting point, we passed Destrehan, named for Jean Noel Destrehan of the German Coast, one of the commissioners who went to Washington to ask that the Terri-

---

## AROUND NINE MILE POINT

---

tory of Orleans be admitted as a state, and one of the members of the first constitutional convention of Louisiana.

As the sun becrimsoned the sky and waters, the *Caddo* passed, downstream bound. That night it would be out to sea, carrying her cargo to foreign ports, or to some east coast port. And, still feebly speaking to ships and shores, were the lights, tiaras lifted high above the waters. We labored diligently until eight-thirty, when, below Kenner and above Twelve Mile Point, we pulled near shore and breakfasted for half an hour. That night we would dine in the Port of a Million Dreams. On both sides of us was Jefferson parish. Gretna, some miles downstream, was the seat of government. This parish is the center of the saltwater shrimp industry.

Breakfast over, we rounded Twelve Mile Point soon after nine o'clock. A strong wind had forced us to tie up to eat. There was little current; when we did not paddle the canoe moved upstream. Below here we found that a strong wind had risen: the rest of the journey was hard paddling in rough water. A mile or two below Avondale, where car transfers ferry trains to and from New Orleans, the *Yucatan*, doughty little tug we had seen the previous afternoon, again passed us. Of all the waves we encountered on the river, packets, excursion steamers, self-propelled barges, towboats, ocean-going vessels, the waves of the tugs were the hardest to meet. They hurl huge waves, short, choppy, and many in rapid succession. Ocean-going boats send larger waves, but they are longer and easier to ride. The tugs throw vicious combers, as though their mad dashes hither and elsewhere gave the river paroxysms.

We rounded Nine Mile Point, and there, through our glasses we could see the Mississippi River Commission gauge at Carrollton. New Orleans ahead! Downstream on both sides were evidences of a great city, the metropolis toward which for days we had labored. Chimneys, church spires, houses behind the levees, buildings rising above the low horizon. New Orleans! Our chimerical city had become real. The shuffling river with its heats and mists, its convolutions and machinations, had brought us at last to the Port of the Valley of the World.

---

## *WHERE GOES THE RIVER*


---

A beatific smile spread over Allen's face, and he rested upon his paddle as though contemplating dreams of opulence, splendor and romance.

An inexpressible look filled his eyes as he said, "I wonder what we'll have to eat for dinner tonight?"

## CHAPTER XXX

*We bring our craft to rest at New Orleans;  
"America's Most Interesting City."*

HE burning of Moscow, storming the Bastile, Siege of Troy, Battle of Waterloo, were as nothing to us compared with the advance upon New Orleans of *The Charles H. Curley of St. Paul*. Benares is the sacred city of the Hindus in India; there the Ganges River forms a great crescent as does the Mississippi at New Orleans. Mecca is the sacred city of Islam, but the sacred city of Romanticists is New Orleans.

We passed Harahan on our left, site of the proposed bridge across the Mississippi for New Orleans. Clouds rolling up, water piling into huge waves, wind urged. We passed Nine Mile Point; nine miles to Canal Street! Fifty ships built for the United States Shipping Board during the war were riding at anchor. Waves growing larger, clouds looking more angry. We struck directly across the river at Westwego, reaching the left bank at Audubon Park. Westwego comes from three words, West-we-go. It was to have been the starting point for railroads to the west. Below Westwego was Gretna, named for Gretna Green, a Scotch border town famous in history for its runaway marriages. This suburb has like fame.

On our left was Carrollton, part of New Orleans, named for General Carroll who fought in the Battle of New Orleans. Audubon Park, hidden behind the huge levee, is named for America's first great naturalist and bird student. It was originally the Foucher plantation, on which the first sugar in Louisiana was manufactured.

After half an hour battle we maneuvered partly into the lee and continued downriver. What boats we passed, names with which to conjure: *Meanticut* of San Francisco; *West Caddoa* of San Francisco; *West Hobomac* of Seattle; *George Pierce* of Chester, Pa.; *Walter D. Munson* of New York; *Suriname* of New York; *Point Lobos* of San Francisco; *Managui* of Glasgow;

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

*Yumin* of New York; *Ansaldo Sesto* of Genova; *Bruxelles* of Anvers; *Caterina Gerolimach* of Trieste; *Gansfjord* of Stavenger; *Barbacena* of Rio; *Maasdam* of Rotterdam; *Mar del Norte* of Bilbao; *Amaldo Sauvio Primo* of Genova; *Scholar* of Liverpool; *Nonviso* of Genova, and small craft.

We stopped at the Mississippi River Commission dock, where the tugs *Yucatan* and *Sipsev* lay. We next reached the new fireboat *Deluge* of the New Orleans Dock Board. On we went, hungry; it was past noon. The wind, waves, stops, and interest we had taken in the negro stevedores loading ships, made fast time impossible. The storm broke and we paddled under the Southern Railroad docks. With rain sweeping the river, we sat under shelter and read an account of New Orleans in 1881. What a contrast. A city reclaimed from swamps. Where marshes and canebrakes abounded and only mosquitoes lived fifty years ago, there is a metropolis. From Julia Street to Canal, where we passed the huge coffee warehouse, in the great river days the docks were lined with bales of cotton. Nearby was the landing from where packets left for upriver cities.

At four o'clock September 10, I left our crescent-shaped craft in the harbor of the Crescent City, and climbed the wooden pilings onto the docks at the foot of Canal Street. Work was in progress on a park at the foot of Canal; heavy rains had made everything a sea of mud. But the clouds were breaking. The sun came out as I saw the Fourteenth of September monument, where on September 14, 1874 a battle took place between Kellogg's Metropolitan Police, maintained by William P. Kellogg, governor of Louisiana by "grace" of carpetbag rule, and a detachment of the White League, and Louisiana was purged of the carpet-baggers.

W. H. Du France, superintendent of docks for the Board of Commissioners for the Port of New Orleans, gave us a place to stow our outfit, and appointed a special detective to watch our canoe. We hurried to the Post Office. Unable to carry good clothes in the canoe, our suits were to be shipped from St. Louis by friends. They had not yet come! At a hotel, we bathed, shaved, and sallied forth in clean white shirts, shined shoes, and

---

## CREOLE FRENCH COFFEE

---

pressed trousers, but without coats or hats. It was hot though mid-September.

As we entered a restaurant that had been recommended, we were informed that gentlemen without coats were not admitted. This was a new experience: never before had we desired to dine out without coats. We looked at our clean, white shirts, neatly pressed trousers, shined shoes, shaved faces. We glanced at patrons who were being seated, many with muddy shoes, shiny coats, disheveled shirts, wrinkled ties, unpressed trousers. We went to a clothes-pressing shop, made a deposit, rented a coat apiece, and returned to the restaurant. The coats were of poor quality, ill-fitting, unpressed, but with gusto the head waiter showed us to a table. With seriousness, after deep deliberation, we ordered a glass of milk apiece and a plate of crackers. When the horrified waiter served this sumptuous banquet, we consumed it with deliberateness and in the grand manner. Were we not entitled to all possible respect? Did we not have coats, regardless of their fit?

After we had enjoyed our crackers and milk, we returned the coats and found a less famous restaurant where we satisfied our hunger. Next morning, waiting at the Post Office before it opened, we were rewarded by receiving our clothes. Wearing the necessary coats, we set out to see New Orleans. As Allen remarked, with an air that reminded me of Bill and Richard, "New Orleans and 2,370 miles from the source. It does seem as though we were beginning to get somewhere."

In 1718 De l'Epinay was recalled and Bienville given charge of the colony of Louisiana. The capital had been at Biloxi. For years Bienville had propagandized for a colony on the river, the river, accessible to hunters, trappers and fishers. Today meat, vegetable, fruit, flowers, and seasonable seafood is sold here, and—coffee. We learned here the true glory of that delectable libation, Creole French dripped coffee, that complement to manna,

*Strong as death, black as night,*

*Sweet as love, and hot as Hell.*

We sat in the coffee stall long after midnight drinking café noir, or café au lait, watching the elite of New Orleans, young and less youthful, stopping here after parties and dances.

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

We went from place to place, basking in daytime suns, reveling in warm, softly seductive nights. A gay city was old New Orleans, with its balls and social life, and yet in 1852, and other years, it was a city of fear. Cholera and yellow fever raged. Deaths from yellow fever ran to eighty-four for every thousand. So long has it been now that residents refer to it vaguely and only when questioned, as something almost as distant as the red death or black plague.

The first carnival parade in New Orleans was in 1827, introduced by a number of young Creole gentlemen recently returned from Paris. Carnival is climaxed and ended by Mardi Gras or "Fat Tuesday," on Shrove Tuesday, which precedes Ash Wednesday, beginning of Lent. It is the safety valve of the city's unsung thousands. They masquerade, parade the streets, and enjoy in a multitude of ways their last "fling" until after Lent. Thousands eagerly look forward from one Mardi Gras midnight to dawn of the next. It is one of the few remaining manifestations of the medieval love of pageantry and pomp, the most festive day of any city in America.

New Orleans awakens as does no other city. Men and women sing. Darkies hum: some bow as they pass on the streets. Children whistle. Even the dogs are friendly. The early morning air is broken by fragments of song. Yet, in spite of negro "blues," youngsters on the streets dancing the Charleston, busy wharves and sky scrapers, we did not forget that we were in the city where Walt Whitman spent his days in 1848, in the city of Lafcadio Hearn, George W. Cable, Grace King, Charles Gayarre, John McClure, and Sherwood Anderson, writers all.

After the trip was completed, I lived in New Orleans, enamoured by its charm, its romance, its individuality, about which tourists speak, but of which in a few hours they learn almost nothing. My visions of Creole maidens promenading the levee on the arms of gallant beaux have all gone glimmering. The easy, lazy, languorous air I had expected to feel dominating the city, is found only in certain places and at rare times. Too many northerners and real estate agents were there, booming the Gulf Coast. There were no duels in the streets, and I saw no lovers strumming guitars under iron galleries.

---

## *THE FAMOUS VIEUX CARRE*

---

Newsboys sell papers everywhere, on street cars, in restaurants, on the steps of churches during services, and no one seems to mind except the newcomers.

The city of New Orleans is composed of alarmingly old families, with all of the virtues and vices that old, old families invariably acquire, of thousands of foreigners, tourists, many thousand negroes, and more thousands of "Just Folks." The older residents have not yet learned to accept New Orleans with a touch of humor. Those who love it, love it madly and are as jealous of its name as the storybook knight was of his Lady Fair. They do not realize that it can be a wonderful city, even "America's Most Interesting City," and yet not be perfect. One must accept it in its entirety or be accused of disliking it: to dislike it is unpardonable.

It is a city of rare charm, of lovely parks, but with many hundreds of hovels in which negroes and poor whites live. It has the quaint French Quarter, much of the attractiveness of which has been destroyed through it having become ramshackle in places and in others commercialized. It has remarkable restaurants, but not one where we found a really satisfactory steak. From the harbor of this Crescent City ships go forth to China, Ceylon, and Europe's ports, to Africa, to Australia, to ports washed by the Yellow Sea, the Mediterranean, Indian Ocean, Caribbean, and the seven seas of our childhood dreams. To New Orleans, brought by the Mississippi from the utmost limits of its vast valley, come the products of interior America, the wealth of an empire.

New Orleans, "America's Most Interesting City," is a feminine city. The Orleanian would rather suffer his right arm to be amputated than to permit an insult to a lady. But there are more of the fair sex standing on street cars while the gallants sit than in any American city. And to get an idea of the Orleanian, one must take a cross-section of the people. One cannot judge the morality of the Middle Ages by the piety of the religious fanatics who enjoyed martyrdom. New Orleans is a city where evening begins at an uncertain time near noon and lasts until an indefinite hour between six and midnight, and where past glories of the Vieux Carre are preyed upon by antique dealers and prayed to by tourists.



---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

New Orleans is a city of antiques and absinthe, balls and belles, churches and carnival, Creoles and culture, children and the Charleston, a city of Democrats and docks, history and hangovers. It is a city of priests and pralines, Latins and leisure, of love and liquor, roustabouts and respectability, palms and pedigrees, mulattoes and mosquitoes. New Orleans is a city of ships and seafood, romance and racing, of negroes and nabobs, of tramps and tourists.

But New Orleans is more than all of these, more than a geographical point, more than a port of tremendous tonnage, more than a city of catch phrases to attract tourists. New Orleans is not only a city. It is an idea. It is a place of opposites and incongruities, where one sees sailors from foreign ships, collegiate students from Tulane University, negroes with their shuffling, limping walks, and staid, conservative cotton planters, rice growers and sugar barons. Weather-beaten buildings stand beside newly constructed skyscrapers and eighteenth century houses are equipped with twentieth century doorbells and electricity. It is a city where prohibition has been little noted, except to raise prices of certain commodities. It is a city of Creole mesdames and modern flappers; a city of poor pies and incomparable shrimp and oysters. It is a city where smoking on the docks is heavily punished and where the murder of a negro goes almost unnoticed. It is a city of broad religious tolerance, and a city where that rarest of American virtues, minding one's own business, is practiced more than any place in this land.

New Orleans is almost entirely surrounded by water, with the amorous Mississippi flowing majestically past its doors, a constant reminder of triumph over nature and the elements, travail and suffering, a reminder that a metropolis is only as great as the labors of its men and the courage of its women, only as interesting and romantic as the dreams of its restless children. From the first, Bienville wanted to sail up the Mississippi, but always was met with the argument that vessels could not enter the blocked passages at the mouth. When he became commandant of the colony, he proposed to send the *Dromadaire*, a vessel of the Company of the West, through one of the mouths as a test. In June, De La Tour, Bien-



(1) A negro roustabout in meditation, watching the scenery as the V. J. Kurzweg plods through one of the many bayous east of New Orleans, reached through the various canals.



(2) Solid Comfort. A roustabout aboard the Ouachita, which plies out of New Orleans, sound asleep with the afternoon sun beating into his face. Shoes off and feet at ease. These "rousties" can sleep any place any time.



(3) This roustabout carrying one hundred and fifty pounds of grain on his head, comes swinging along up the Ouachita stage as though it were all in the day's play instead of work.



(2) An old negro roustabout asleep in a coil of rope aboard the Ouachita, resting between stops at landings where they took on or discharged freight.

(4) "Seben coma eleben." "Ah gotta buy ma baby shoes." A game of the ancient and honorable pastime of shooting craps, sometimes jovially referred to as "African Golf." Aboard the V. J. Kurzweg.



(1) None of these negroes could talk or understand more than a few words of English, but they were happy as larks to have their picture taken on the levee top at Lucy, Louisiana. Below Baton Rouge these benches are seen at frequent intervals, where the negroes sit at even-tide or during lunch hours.

(3) A typical crew of roustabouts found aboard river packets plying out of New Orleans and Memphis. This is the crew of the Ouachita.

---

## A ROMANTIC OLD CITY

---

ville's engineer, and Pauger, assistant to De La Tour, sailed a loaded vessel through the river mouth, followed by other ships with supplies and materials. From this time on Louisiana ceased to be merely a colonial experiment. Then Bienville's engineers laid out the city, which is the Vieux Carre or French Quarter of today. This city, founded by Bienville in 1718, is still one of romance, old world atmosphere and charm, linked with the past by memories spun into a web with golden floss, and with all parts of the world by the thousands of ships at its docks. What today is Canal Street formed the moat along the upper wall. It was filled in in 1838.

By 1725 a government house had been built, the Cathedral erected, the Place d'Armes laid out and levees put up before the city. A few miles from New Orleans in any direction, climbing, crawling vines, rank undergrowth, tall grasses, canebrakes, interminable forests, battled for a place in the air and earth.

Almost the entire city was consumed in a fire on Good Friday, 1788. It burned nearly nine hundred buildings, including the Cathedral, Convent of the Capuchians, Town Hall and Arsenal. Don Andres Almonester y Roxas, an immensely wealthy Spaniard of Andalusia who had settled here, supplied funds and the Cathedral was rebuilt. An even greater fire burned most of New Orleans in 1795. Only two stores and the newly completed Cathedral escaped. New Orleans was incorporated as a city in 1805.

Louisiana had been a state but a few weeks when Congress declared war on England. The battle of New Orleans, fought under General Andrew Jackson January 8, 1815, resulted in a great victory for the Americans. The British lost two thousand of their seven thousand in the field. The Americans lost eight killed and thirteen wounded. Two weeks before the Battle of New Orleans, a treaty of peace had been signed.

During the Civil War, the Federals under Farragut and Porter forced the surrender of New Orleans, April 25, 1862. General B. F. Butler, placed in command of the city, is still hated for his methods and unnecessarily severe measures. The one redeeming feature of his stay is that he cleaned up the city and made it healthier than it had ever been.

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

The first levee at New Orleans was built in 1718, one mile long, four feet high and eighteen feet across the top. Floods greatly hampered Bienville in his efforts to make the settlement in 1718. By 1735 levees extended from English Turn, a dozen miles below the city, to thirty miles above. The first men to build levees had no thoughts of a vast levee system; the builder merely cast up a "potato ridge" to satisfy immediate and local needs. Some orator once called this river "God's Eternal Highway." It has been often called "God's Infernal Highway." Its power is realized only when one breasts the waters or watches ocean liners fight the current.

The *New Orleans* reached here January 10, 1812. This boat, built at a cost of \$38,000, had made the trip from Pittsburgh in two hundred and fifty-nine running hours. Most of those who saw it predicted that it never could stem the current. An old negro at Natchez, after recovering from the shock of seeing the boat, said, "Ole' Mississippi got her massa dis time." But even yet this stream has not been conquered.

A century ago upriver people, especially boatmen, Ohioans, Kentuckians, and others coming down the Ohio and its tributaries, were not given the welcome we received. Street urchins, white and black, would follow strangers along the streets, crying,

*American rogue,  
Dressed in nankeen,  
Stealer of bread,  
From the home of d' Aquin.*

But the great stream continued to roll southward, bringing more and more Americans into this newly acquired American land, populated largely by Creoles, French and Spanish intermarried. In 1822 New Orleans had a population of 41,350, a city standing in the center of a cypress swamp.

What a city was this little Paris of America a century ago. Sometimes from one thousand to fifteen hundred flatboats, barges, arks, and more than six thousand boatmen were here at one time. Steamboats arrived and left hourly: forests of spars and masts constantly were seen. There was less activity during the sultry summer season, but for the first four months

---

## PLACE D'ARMES AND PONTALBA

---

of the year there was a bustle here equalled nowhere in America. New Orleans reached its greatest relative importance in this country in 1839, when its trade equalled New York's.

New Orleans has a forty mile water frontage on both sides of the river and along the Industrial Canal. Of this, more than six miles is equipped by state owned steel sheds, wharves, cotton warehouses, coal tipples and a grain elevator, operated by the Dock Board. In addition to being the terminus of river transportation, and important in ocean commerce, it is on the Intra-Coastal waterway, which will provide a nine-foot channel from New Orleans to Corpus Christi through Morgan City and Galveston.

Lacking a bridge, ferries carry traffic across the river. The combined ferries of New Orleans in one year transport eight million passengers. In 1925 New Orleans ranked second in waterborne commerce of this land, with nine and one-half million tons, compared with New York's twenty-two millions.

We determined to see the city, not merely take a flying trip as tourists through the French Quarter and motor to the parks. We wandered through the Vieux Carre, and within a few squares heard spoken a dozen tongues. There are three ports of romance in this country, so say sailors who ride the salty seas, New York, San Francisco, and, most romantic, New Orleans. It is cosmopolitan: it comprehends. It has seen life since the Indian village Tchou-Tchouma stood here beside the river.

Everything in the French Quarter centers around Jackson Square, called of old Place d'Armes. Here troops were drilled for the Battle of New Orleans: here was the meeting place of the old city: here the promenade at eventide. Facing the river is St. Louis Cathedral, with the Cabildo, built in 1795, and the Museum flanking it. On two sides of the square are the Pontalba buildings, long three-story red brick structures, built in 1846 by the Baroness Anna Pontalba, only child of Don Andres Almonaster y Roxas. Here Jenny Lind lived as guest of Madame La Baronne. Here Thackeray spent his hours while in the city. Today the buildings house persons ranging from impeccable French and Italian housewives to artists and journalists, and on the ground floor, from cigar factory and cafe to seamen's mission and shoestore.

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

The Old French Market, was called when founded in 1813, *Les Salles des Boucheries*, or, "The Meat Shops." It was built beside the dock where waters of the harbor still sparkle, ships ride at rest at their moorings and gulls wheel and turn in the air. The vessels in the port fly flags of countries famous throughout the annals of time. But not one of them can carry us across the salty seas of billowing deeps to a city of greater romance and charm than New Orleans, "America's Most Interesting City," and "Port of the Mississippi Valley to the World."

## CHAPTER XXXI

*New Orleans Harbor in a rainstorm; Visit from a hydroplane; Promised Land; Doullut's canal; Venice; Pilot Toun.*



NE hundred and ten miles to the Gulf of Mexico." We pushed off at the foot of Canal Street, traveling light, with two blankets, our invaluable water jug, extra paddles, a change of clothing and small supply of food. Five days at the worst would see the end of the journey. We were ready for whatever might happen on the extreme lower stretches. Most persons believe that New Orleans is located right on the Gulf. By air in some directions it is only a few miles; as the river flows, it is one hundred and ten miles.

Even in the short time we had been off the river, we had grown lonesome for it. Its mysterious whisperings, alluring, lulling sounds echoed in our ears. Into the lives of those who follow it, it brings a fascination no other force can satisfy. It fights our efforts to conquer it, making love to us all the while. Its treacherous waves and fierce currents seek to destroy us. Yet it wins us by a charm that those who see it only from banks or bridges can never understand.

"What do we care if it does rain," we defiantly shouted, and climbed into the canoe.

We started across the river, bound for Algiers Point: on that side we would be in the lee of a steadily rising wind. It seemed that every boat in the harbor leaped into action. Crossing the 3,600 foot wide stream, which, off Algiers Point was nearly one hundred and seventy-five feet deep, was not an inviting prospect. We dodged a ferry, turned to meet its waves, and saw an ocean liner bearing down on us. Several minutes of furious paddling, a slight shift in the course of the ship and we evaded it. Then a cocky little tug, the sauciest craft on the river, came quarterwise at us, giving no idea whether it intended to run us down or to which side it might pass. It turned and steamed upstream, throwing waves larger than those of



---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

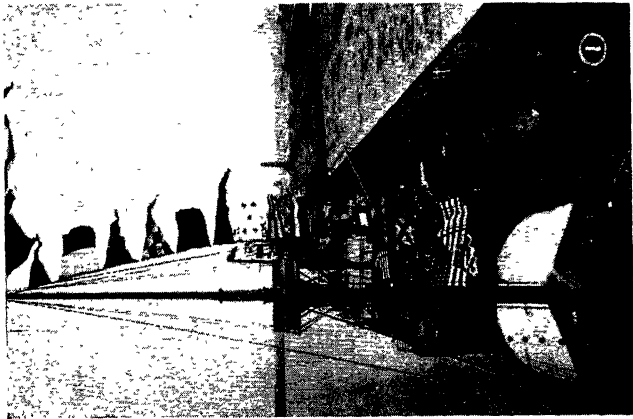
any ocean liner. In spite of these tugs, *Sipsey*, *R. W. Wilmot*, and *Samson*, and what seemed scores of others, we got across, but not before we realized that we were, after all, only impudent imps, sporting impotently upon the artery of a nation.

We gained the lee shore, rounding Algiers Point. Algiers, that part of New Orleans on the west bank, a century ago was headquarters for flatboatmen. It was built out of lumber and timbers that came down the Mississippi in the form of flatboats, keelboats, and other craft: it appears never to have been rebuilt. First called Slaughter House Point, because the abattoirs of the city were located there in 1814, it later was known as Duverjeville. About the time that Admiral Stephen Decatur compelled the Algerian pirates in 1815 to cease their depredations upon American vessels, a prominent New Orleans merchant came here to inspect some vessels. Caught in a severe storm, he was compelled to seek refuge in a saloon. The men there, knowing of his wealth, refused to let him go until he had bought them all a drink. He called them a band of Algerian pirates. With many more drinks they christened the town Algiers.

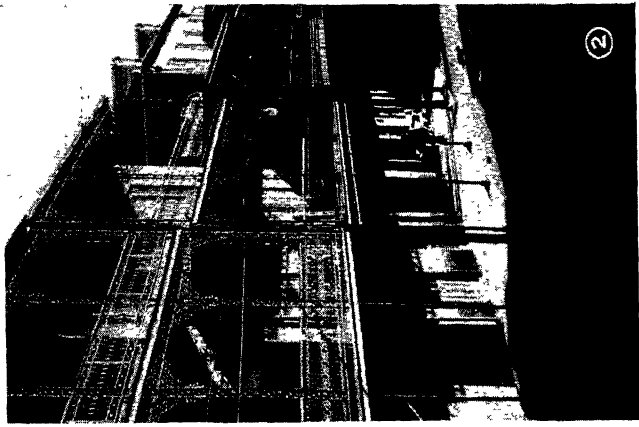
Soon after we rounded Algiers Point, a storm broke. We paddled in the lee of a number of vessels at anchor. We kept out of the wind as long as possible, until, past the ships, we hugged the right shore. We paddled past one houseboat, anchored snugly in a little cove. The owner called, "Hey, youse fellas, in case you don't know it, it's raining."

We ignored him: soaked but haughty, we paddled proudly on. Some authority says that 750,000 miles of rain have fallen upon the earth since the sedimentary age began. Most of it fell during the morning of September 12. When Allen began the trip, he would have made a good husband for Elsie Dinsmore: now he would have shocked Lucretia Borzia. He hurled invectives at sky, wind, river and nature for their obstinacy and perverseness.

There is a beauty about a storm on the Mississippi, in spite of its discomforts. From windows of cozy shelters one misses much of the force of a river storm. The smells of rain and wind are almost lost before they filter through half-opened windows. The lashings of the torrents are not felt. To really appreciate



(1) Views of the docks and river at New Orleans, taken from the lookout of the U. S. S. Cleveland, Navy Day, October 27.



(2) A typical street scene in the Vieux Carre, Old French Quarter, New Orleans. The iron grillwork of the galleries is one of the features of the quarter. The black cat in the street failed to ruin the picture.



(3) Port Eads, two miles from the mouth of South Pass looking upstream. The Gulf of Mexico is seen behind the Eads jetties.



(1) An unusual picture showing the bow of The Charles H. Curley of St. Paul, Bert Bonney's New Orleans Air Line hydroplane, and an ocean freighter New Orleans bound.

(2) Wooden revetments erected to protect the earthen levees from waves caused by wind and passing steamers. This was taken near and opposite Pointe a la Hache, not far from where we saw persons tearing them down to use the wood for fires.

(3) A typical lower coast dock, built out at the level of the levee, far enough so that ships may run in at any time and take produce away or leave supplies.

---

## RAIN ON THE WATERS

---

a river rain one ought to stand in the bow of a steamer or paddle a frail canoe. The rain sweeps across in fantastic designs. It blots out one side, then the other. It isolates the canoe. Boats pass by within a stone's throw, but those aboard the larger vessels do not know it. We see only vague, black outlines of huge hulks, with lights on forward and after masts and peeking through portholes. The wind ripples the surface, Then the rain rushes rampant across the river, scurrying back to where it started. Lightning more fantastic than fireworks displays burns across the sky in memorable streaks. Rain falls so heavily that it seems a mist or heavy fog is also rising. It rains enough in five minutes to make even the most rabid fundamentalist doubt the Biblical promise of no more floods. The world is being washed clean.

At the lower end of New Orleans was the Industrial Canal, linking the Father of Waters with Lake Pontchartrain, a short-cut of one hundred miles to Mobile. Not far below the canal we passed the American Sugar Refinery, largest in the world, then the plains of Chalmette, where Jackson saved New Orleans.

Farther downstream in the driving wind we almost followed what looked to be the main river, so wide that, in the hazy light, we thought it the channel. Here the Poydras Crevasse of April 27, 1922, broke through the dikes and flooded practically all of the lands on the east side of the river between New Orleans and the Gulf. It created a gulch half a mile back from the main channel, five hundred feet wide and ninety feet deep. A crevasse may be caused by many things, a woodchuck, muskrat, or even such a seemingly unimportant thing as a crawfish burrowing into the earth and leaving the hole through which water may work and start a leak: or an old tree trunk left in the levee and sinking, thus forming a cavity which fills with seepage. Sometimes an underground passage forces its way up to the levee, or when water is near the top, a cross wind may make waves, eroding the upper layers. The water-soaked earth sometimes slumps down, or the back wall gives way.

We paddled on; still it rained, not only cats and dogs and pitchforks, but in solid sheets, in chunks, in masses. The skies opened and dropped their entire contents. The heaviest rain-

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

fall we had experienced was a sprinkle by comparison. Every few minutes we had to bail out the canoe.

We were in St. Bernard parish, which was created in 1807. Rounding English Turn we came to Plaquemines, the last parish on the river, French for "persimmons" which grew here in abundance: it was created in 1807. Half way between Poydras Crevasse and Shingle Point, across the waters, a voice pleasantly boomed, "Ohhh, Mist-ter Tousss-leeeeeey. Wonttt youu brin-ng yourrr comp-pan-yunn over and have lun-nchh?"

We spied a Mississippi River Commission quarter boat. Was ever question so foolish or so welcome? We broke all world's speed records reaching the *Q-11*. Our canoe cared for, we were taken indoors, where several minutes later we sat before a fire in dry clothes, our own sizzling in the cheerful heat of the stoves. At the noon-day meal, Allen ate so much I was ashamed of him: he expressed the same sentiments about me. Until three o'clock, we toasted our toes and enjoyed the hospitality.

When we left the *Q-11* it still was raining, but our lives were no longer endangered by falling pitchforks. Rounding Shingle Point we were startled by a hydroplane roaring downriver. It was flying low: the pilot waved and a moment later the plane disappeared downstream.

Ten minutes later we heard the plane zooming back. It went over our heads so close we thought it was going to cut them off. I stood up to take a picture of the canoe and plane, but nearly fell into the river when it swooped toward us. It wheeled, glided to the water, and coasted up beside us. The pilot was Bert Bonney, who carried mail for the New Orleans Aircraft Company between New Orleans and Pilot Town. Mail is taken downriver after boats have left, and from half a day to a day's business is transacted while they are steaming downstream.

Bert Bonney had run into a severe storm down near the Head of Passes. Through Walter Parker, executive manager of the New Orleans Association of Commerce, points on the lower coast had been informed of our progress, and the pilots and aviators had been asked to keep their eyes peeled to render any services that might be needed. Bonney said it would have

---

## *A HYDROPLANE VISIT*

---

been suicidal for him to have attempted to reach Pilot Town in the gale that was sweeping the passes, so he had returned to warn us, in case the storm headed upriver. We would not be caught out on this river this night, we had firmly resolved. On Jesuits Bend we pulled the canoe onto the slippery, slimy shore, dragged it over oozy mud, tied it to a tree and climbed up over the levee.

We had the same shock here that we had experienced many times. Paddling along, with levees on both sides, we constantly felt cut off from the world, with nothing in it but our canoe, ourselves and passing vessels. Each time we went ashore, we were startled to find houses, stores, trees and farms behind the levees. From a negro boy, we learned that we were at Dalcour. We sought any shelter that would keep us out of the night and the mosquitoes out of our veins.

While in New Orleans the mosquitoes were terrible: it was the worst attack in years. Especially did they bite in the early morning and at sundown. And especially did they bite the ankles. Someone asked me where mosquitoes spent the winter. Though unable to say, I do know, judging from the lives they led, where those who bit us will spend eternity. Below New Orleans the situation was probably little improved since the French priest Poisson wrote in 1718, "The mosquitoes have caused more swearing since the French have been here than had previously taken place in all of the rest of the world." After four o'clock we had to remain at least one hundred yards from shore or have such swarms about us that we could not paddle. When we landed at Dalcour and pulled the canoe onto the mud, we danced Apache dances. We had large bandanas, which we flipped, flopped, slapped and swished steadily, but could not drive the armies away. We reached out into the air and grabbed handfuls. Our hands, arms, faces and bodies were black with the pests.

We had no place to sleep. We were not going to lie in the canoe, covered by a blanket apiece, with millions of mosquitoes ready to steal blankets and blood. Nor were we going to venture out onto the deep, silent river. We hurried to the first house, explained ourselves and our mission. Our case was hopeless. It was an Italian family with enough children

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

for one to a mosquito. The father was sorry, and directed us several hundred yards up the road, but said that if we could find no other place, they would make beds on the floor for us.

We called at the home of Mrs. Margaret Meyers, owner of Promised Land plantation, explained the situation and five minutes later were consuming welcome food. Promised Land indeed! We were ready to believe that stretching out behind the plantation home were the Elysian Fields. With pleasant company, excellent fare, warm, dry housing from the damp, dewy night, here were specious inducements for leaving any river: for a few hours we enjoyed a subsidized truce in our war with this greatest of streams.

Our mileage for September 12 was disappointing; with our late start, long rest period, delay by rain and early desertion of the river, we had made only twenty-three miles. Eighty-four remained, to be done in three days, if we were to finish the trip on schedule. Mrs. Meyers was not satisfied with taking us into her home, but she insisted upon getting up next morning and making Creole French dripped coffee. She had asked us what time we wished to start and we had told her. But we were awake before the hour and dressed quietly as possible, only to find breakfast ready.

We pushed into the current by six-thirty, just before the sun arrived. We rounded Jesuits Bend after fighting our way through clouds of mosquitoes, then Poverty Point. Noon brought another invitation to lunch, at the La Fourche Basin Levee Board quarter boat, two miles below Point Celeste. Levee builders below New Orleans have much easier tasks than upriver. Rises of the waters are not nearly so great nor so sudden, and loss from floods is much less. Below Poverty Point there are only narrow strips on each side, running down to Head of Passes, on which chiefly truck is grown. Below Promised Land on both sides of the river, we saw orange groves. Just below Poverty Point, opposite the Myrtle Grove plantation, is one of the two deepest places in the river: it is one hundred and ninety feet.

After two hours with the La Fourche men we again took to the river. A heavy upstream wind with no current made traveling hard work. About mid-afternoon the *Manx Isles* passed,

---

## NEAR LA FITTE'S RENDEZVOUS

---

upstream bound, and blew a salute. Seven miles below Point Celeste, we passed Pointe a la Hache, fifty miles below New Orleans. La Salle planned to fortify the river sixty miles above the mouth, probably where Pointe a la Hache today stands. On what must have been the site of this seat of government of Plaquemines parish, Fort Maurepas was built, completed May 1, 1699.

Ten miles west of Pointe a la Hache was Barataria Bay, named for the Island of Barataria, of which Sancho Panza was made governor in the story of Don Quixote. Barataria and the island of Grand Terre were smuggling headquarters of Jean Lafitte. A network of bayous and canals linked Barataria with the Mississippi and New Orleans.

Pointe a la Hache means "Point of the Hatchet," so called because of a hatchet shaped point of land here where the river turned. Some say that a ship's carpenter dropped an axe overboard as a vessel passed here, and it was named Pointe a la Hache. The redroofed courthouse and other buildings showed above the low levee, but the river was too rough to cross. This is the scene of much rum running. Cargoes are dropped off here by vessels coming up the river in the fog or dark. The inhabitants in and near the town are Spanish, Portuguese, Italian and French. When federal agents make raids, they seldom find proof. Without proof, who can say?

Cruising along quietly near Pointe a la Hache we saw persons stealing lumber from the wooden levees, built to protect the earthen dikes from wave wash and wind waves. Colonel G. M. Hoffman, Mississippi River Commission member from New Orleans, told us that this habit of appropriating the lumber used in levee protections causes river engineers much trouble and expense.

We had started around Sixty-Mile Point when darkness enveloped us before we could select a place across which to make our way to the levee, despite our determination not to be caught on the river in the dark again. Between the levee and the canoe lay marshy land, full of pit holes and covered with logs and roots of trees, spectral ogres. We had to keep away from shore because mosquitoes were so bad that even with jackets on, and with handkerchiefs on our heads and around



---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

our necks, we were badly bitten. We landed once and splashed around in Stygian darkness over stumps, into mudholes and pools, over trees, until, wet and half mad with bites and bruises, we returned to the canoe. We knew that if we could get to a channel light we could find a way to some place behind the levee, for someone had to get there to tend it.

At a light we hauled up the canoe, lifted it back over the remains of an old levee which juttied up a foot and dragged it back ten yards from the water. Here it would be safe. We took our paddles to prevent anyone playing a practical joke. It was the blackest night we had ever seen. All other blacks were luminous by comparison. Not a light beamed near us, save the channel beacon above, which lent us no aid. Feeling our way with our paddles, like two blind men using canes in a crowded city street, we threaded our way over, under, and between obstacles, up onto the levee. We were so bitten, bruised, battered, that either would have suggested camping on the spot had he dared. The frogs maintained a monotonous chorus, one side croaking, "Knee deep," the other replying, "Jump in." As we stood on the levee, even the frogs stopped. Someone told us that the mosquitoes down here were so bad that it took two frogs to live one season. There were no sounds but villainous mosquitoes chanting incantations of joy over the meal delivered to them, and the river telling us its secrets, secrets that now we could not even listen to. Nothing stirred save the whirr of millions of wings, driving these demons at us in phalanxes.

Lighting several matches we discovered narrow planking leading back from the levee. Nothing more grotesque happened on the entire trip than walking these planks in the blackness, aided by lighted matches which flickered a moment, bit the darkness and went out. Walking the plank in the piratical days usually permitted some dignity. We must have resembled a burlesque on tightrope walkers. Often one foot slipped from these six-inch boards, but we never fell off. Several times we crawled on hands and knees, after we had seen water blackly glistening by the faint glare of our lucifers. At last we stepped from the planking onto ground. More matches aided us through a chicken yard, garden, up to a house, where we nearly fright-

---

## RAILROAD TIES AND A REFUGE

---

ened the occupants out of their skins. We could neither make ourselves understood nor understand the man who came to the door with a rifle. The language was not French, German or Spanish. When we saw the mother and two little girls, in the dim light, kneeling on the floor, praying and crossing themselves in panic, we decided to justify their faith in Divine Aid, and seek shelter elsewhere. At another house nearby, they had no room for anybody, but directed us to Arnoli's a mile down the railroad track which passed their front yard.

More matches lighted our way to the railroad. We had walked ties before, but there had always been a fair degree of evenness in the manner in which they were laid. On this road, which runs from Algiers to Burras, some ties were so close a cent would not have dropped between them: others were a long step apart. Allen rose to new and unparalleled heights in originality in devising epithets. He could easily have qualified in either a steamboatman or mule skinner swearing contest. His conversational gymnastics would have produced a startling effect upon anything relatively human, cows, mules, negro stevedores, sailors, even newspapermen, but with these instruments of the devil, mosquitoes and railroad tracks, his efforts availed little.

Mosquitoes! Of all the bellicose, pugnacious, vile animals we have ever met, worse even than the Point Clair ants, these tormenters were unequalled. A guilty conscience in a Puritan was joy compared with the pain and suffering these beasts caused. No pachydermatous persons were we: nor did we become immunized. Nor did our wavings and gestures skyward and seaward have any effect upon our unbidden guests. Sadly abused by the acrimonious mosquitoes, we reached J. Arnoli's Hotel at Doullut's Canal. No amount of unguents kept the wild animals away. Any lotion applied, from heavy axle grease to expensive drug store preparations, served only to lubricate their bills and enable them to delve into hitherto untouched places with sibilant joy. Lights and unmistakable sounds identified Arnoli's: we pushed in through the heavily screened door. The place housed a little store, soft drink parlor and quarters for the proprietor and his wife downstairs. Up-

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

stairs were accommodations for transients and the unmarried of the settlement.

"My God," one called, "The man's sprained both ankles!"

"My God," another ejaculated, "The other has smallpox!"

The men forgot their ancient and honorable game of poker and inspected us. Allen's face, hands, arms and neck looked as though he had smallpox. They were swollen and red. My ankles had puffed to twice their normal size. Half an hour later, with nearly forty miles covered for the day, and forty-five between us and the Gulf, we rubbed each other with ointments and dropped into bed. Doullut's Canal is a little fishing village, the inhabitants of which make their living from oysters, shrimp and other seafood of Adams Bay, a mile from the river, linked by the canal, which was built by Captain M. P. Doullut.

We were about to leave, early September 14, but Mr. Arnoli was almost insulted upon discovering that we planned to depart without our coffee. He had heard us stirring and with his wife had arisen and prepared breakfast. Throughout Louisiana it is less of a crime to shoot a man or beat him than to send a guest away without his coffee for breakfast. The coffee must not be ruined by cold cream. If one cannot drink it black, then he may have hot milk. A good day's work cannot be done, luck cannot come to host or guest, disaster might befall, hunger surely would overtake him, if the host permitted anyone to step into the morning air without his coffee. One might be delayed half an hour. One might miss a train. One might be late for an appointment. But one must have his coffee. So it was six o'clock before we bade Mr. Arnoli adieu, and set out to seek our canoe.

We came abreast the first light above Doullut's Canal, Allen some yards ahead. He turned, gasping, "Pudge, it's gone!"

Allen's deep bronze faded to an ashy grey. We stared up and down the river, looking through our field glasses, but saw nothing. We ran around desperately, looking behind logs and under stumps, as though the canoe had crawled away to die. Less than forty-five miles to the end, and no canoe. *The Charles H. Curley of St. Paul*, true to us in many moments of peril, had deserted us at last. Far up the river where we had stopped

---

## THE CANOE IS LOST

---

for a jug of water, a woman saw our canoe and came down to examine it. She was thrilled with its crimson beauty.

"My," she ejaculated, "Ain't it elegant!"

It was "elegant" no more, with paint scraped off, scarred and battered, but we loved it just the same. In opposite directions we started to search for traces. A minute later a shout cleaved the air and re-echoed with such joyous tones that I knew neither alligators chasing him or a foot twisted in a mudhole inspired it. Fifty yards inshore and upstream from its anchorage, against the wooden revetment, was *The Charles H. Curley of St. Paul*, muddy, weather and water worn, but whole and sound. We examined it as though it were a child, dropped out of the cradle onto its head.

Perhaps there is no tide on the river, for Gulf tides average little over a foot, but if there is not, waves from passing ships were prodigious. To have torn a canoe loose from its moorings and deposited it nearly fifty yards away takes large waves. Nothing was spilled, no damage done, except to our hearts when we missed the canoe.

Finding the craft did not end our troubles. From the first we fought heavy head winds, which swept upriver as though anxious to reach St. Paul by night. We paddled steadily, intending to cross at the next bend. By eight o'clock the waters were too rough to attempt it. From nine-fifteen to ten we breakfasted. We had to take turns eating and paddling. About where we ate two miles above Bolivar Point, is one of the two deepest holes in the river, one hundred and ninety feet. The mosquitoes were too bad close to shore for us to tie up: the wind was so strong that one of us had to paddle to keep it from driving us upstream. All of the time the river continued to speak. How, we thought, could we truly call it "Father of Waters," when it is always talking. Seventy-five miles from New Orleans on the east bank is Fort St. Philip. Downstream and almost across is old Fort Jackson, the ruins of which are gradually withdrawing into the swamps from which the fort emerged generations ago.

These forts on Plaquemines Bend were fortified by the French and used as embattlements by the Spanish. They were repaired under Jackson in 1814, and attacked by the British January 9, 1815, after the Battle of New Orleans. They were

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

besieged until January 18, but did not surrender. They were also the scene of a battle of the Civil War.

Three miles below Fort St. Philip on the east side, it was planned to build a canal that would empty into Little Coquille Bay, thence into Breton Island Sound, an outlet for river traffic. As late as 1870 this plan to cut a channel through four miles of soft alluvium found popular favor, backers of the project believing it impossible to ever keep the channel at any of the mouths open to vessels of deep draft.



*"We breakfasted" Allen Sulerud, food and the famous water bottle.*

The story of the rest of the morning is one of combat and conflict. We paddled laboriously against irascible winds, determined to reach Pilot Town according to plan, or spend the night on the river. It took from ten o'clock to one-thirty to make eight miles between Fort Jackson and Venice, the last settlement above The Jump. At one place we went ashore to get some sox to wear on our trip back from the Gulf, stopping at a little store.

"I'd like two pairs of sox, size twelve," said Allen.

"Soxes, yassah," replied the black young man in charge. He looked over the supply, rummaged through the stock, scratched his woolly head, looked again, answering at last,

---

## OPPOSITION FROM WIND

---

"Wese ver' sorry, sah, but it's too early for soxes down hyar. Dey is out of season."

Back on the river we welcomed the battle, gloried in this last flare-up of forces, laughed in glee as we outwitted sly attacks of surreptitious gusts. It seemed at times as though the canoe would carry on to the end of its own volition, as it rode white caps and swept up out of troughs. Our muscles were in perfect condition. Hour after hour, day after day, we had fought this libertine stream. Now with two score miles ahead, the goal a day away, we would not stop. We had not tipped over, but if we did, we would climb in and paddle on. We were somewhat atavistic, like our ancient ancestors, healthy animals, possessed of a love of being, proud of trained bodies, able to enjoy the thrill of labor. There was something stultifying in the thought of the meager existence picked up by most persons from the largess of earth.

Our progress was so slow that quite a group had gathered when we reached P. J. Burras' dock at Venice, one-fourth of a mile above The Jump. His landing was like dozens on the lower coast, built even with the top of the levee, extending out a score of yards so that at all stages of water boats might run alongside.

"Come in and have a cup of coffee," said P. J. Burras. We spent two hours with him and his family, looking over his orange groves, creole-banana trees, from which we picked and ate, his store, which furnishes supplies to hunters, fishers, and residents of the region, and partaking of excellent food and drink. His home was another hall of hospitality. Our host offered to take us across the river in his motor boat: Pilot Town was on the east side. We refused. We had traversed nearly twenty-five hundred miles by canoe, unaided by any mechanical propulsion, and would not now yield to wind and white-capped combers. With farewells in French and English, for many residents of the lower coast are descendants of old French settlers, we pushed off at three-thirty, and at four were opposite The Jump.

Of all the names on the maps, none had the fascination that this one did—The Jump, an opening twenty-three miles above the end of South Pass. When first we studied the maps and

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

made a mental trip down the river, it seemed as though only a dream would ever take us to The Jump. Now, here we were, fighting some of the devilish winds released by Ulysses' men while he slept.

We had reached the last land on the river having real estate value. There were no more plantations, towns, ground on which farmers raised crops. Several gardens at Pilot Town and Port Eads were conducted as hobbies. The Jump was the site of an old custom house. The Jump is the opening to Grand Pass, one route by which Baratarian smugglers made their way to New Orleans with rich cargoes of contraband. Once a channel twenty feet deep led into Grand Pass. Some water goes through it now, but not much. From The Jump down Southwest Pass there is nothing but a jungle of plants, trees and bushes, visited only by trappers, hunters and occasional overflows of the river.

Here I tried vainly, with Allen as balance wheel, anchor, navigator and helmsman, to photograph one of a dozen porpoises that emulated the name of the locality and sported around for our pleasure, but not, so far as pictures were concerned, for our profit. I nearly broke our excellent record of not having upset, in my wild efforts to turn in all directions at one time and snap the jolly sea-hogs.

Seven miles below was Pilot Town, our destination the last night of the trip, sixteen miles from the Gulf via South Pass. We were eager to make Pilot Town, but the wind showed no signs of abating. After an hour of steady paddling, we saw in the late afternoon light, Quarantine Station, and, through our field glasses, Pilot Town, two miles below. As the sun lowered, the shore became more hirsute. Thoughts of night on the black river lent strength to our arms. We drew opposite Quarantine, but were so low in the water, against a dark background, none could see us. Just below lay Cubits Gap, an old crevasse opening into Breton Sound.

Opposite Quarantine Station, where foreign ships stop for inspection before proceeding upstream, we began to sidle across the river. We could not proceed directly, so we quartered our way, shambling sideways as we went forward. A huge vessel passed us, less than twenty-five yards away, a moving wall,

---

## *SOMETHING ABOUT PILOTS*

---

but in the dusk none saw us. Though the waves were still high, the wind was at rest, so we edged our way at dark across the stream to Pilot Town. The pilots had their weather eyes peeled. In those mellow moments immediately after dark, when a fleeting light returns, we reached the dock, jumped from our canoe and were rushed to food: others looked after our craft.

What an evening we spent visiting river and bar pilots, Judge and Mrs. G. W. Delesdernier, who keep the last store on the river at Pilot Town and whose son is a pilot. We hear much of "men who go down to the sea in ships," but little of those who take the ships down. Our experiences with the pilots, both those who guide vessels downstream or up and those who take ships out and bring them back across the bars at the mouths of the South and Southwest passes, was a highlight of the journey. The pilots are men of action, noisy, some of them, friendly, goodhearted, far better read than the average, ruddy of face, free of tongue, full of stories (some true and most of them not), rollicking, fascinating souls.

The night we arrived piloting was easy. But on rainy or foggy nights, in storms, when floods make treacherous currents and carry down quantities of debris, when the bars at the mouths change, when seas are rough and the tug goes out to put the pilot onto the ship he is to bring back, when cold, bitter winds sweep the seas, when waves break over the lighthouses at the mouths, the story is different. Who takes the ships out in all kinds of weather? Who brings them in? The pilots, the men with whom we laughed, joked, swapped yarns, the jovial, cocksure men who argue for the joy of it, who love life, who face danger with a smile, a quip, with steady eye, trained mind, unerring memory. There is nothing vicarious about their lives. No callow juveniles are they, despite the youthful, debonair mien of many. They have no time to sip at the chalice of existence, but must needs drink deep. When they stand upon the bridge and peer into inscrutable night blackness knowing that upon them rests the safety of a passenger liner with lives of hundreds or a freighter with valuable cargo, they sense the glory of living with a sagacity born of silent vigils.



---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

Pilot Town is a single row of houses, built on pilings, stretching along the river a mile below Cubits Gap and two miles above Head of Passes. In addition to the two large dormitories which shelter the river and bar pilots, there are a score of other buildings, including homes, school, the Delesdernier store, trapper and fisher cabins, all standing white and clean against a green background.

A shower bath, a talk before the fire, for down on the Gulf the winds blow cool at night, and nine-thirty found us ready for bed. But first we elicited promises from half of the pilots to waken us before dawn. We had been told that if we crossed The Spread, the wide place where the river divides into three passes, before it grew rough, the rest of the trip would be easy. So, with hearts and minds set on an early start, and journey's end on the morrow, and with assurances from everybody that somebody would rouse us even though the watchman forgot, we went to bed, and were carried away to slumber, even as we pondered "Where Goes The River."

## CHAPTER XXXII

### *Head of Passes: Pass a L'Outre, Southwest Pass, South Pass; Port Eads; the Mouth; Where Goes the River.*



STYGLIAN darkness enveloped the out-of-doors. Through the window from time to time came sounds of someone walking down the wooden walk to the dock, a gasoline engine starting, a boat chugging away. Out on the river were lights of a ship. A pilot was going aboard to guide the vessel to New Orleans or across the bar. Within eight to twelve hours the craft would reach New Orleans—in two hours be across the bar. I sat up and pondered the world. How could I sleep? Today was the last of the journey! What a long night! Daylight had skipped us: we were having two nights of darkness. Some noises were scarcely audible, night sounds. I dressed and laid on the bed. I would not leave the room until called or until daybreak. Ages and eons passed!

When the watchman at last called me, I bounded into the living room: from another room came Allen. He, too, was ready. We had coffee and a light breakfast. The wakeful pilots would not let us start on empty stomachs. At five forty-five we returned in the dark to our venerable canoe. With calls of "Good Luck" and "Smooth Sailing," we left the dock at Pilot Town shortly before dawn September 15. Our last day! Many other mornings we had paddled into the stream, but no such responsibility rested upon us then as now. With luck we would reach the Gulf, by noon.

We had been warned about The Spread. Here the Mississippi divides into three channels, and, forklike, rushes out to the Gulf. Because of the threatened roughness, we wanted to cross early, before the wind came up. There was an air of anticipation, of tenseness, not found even on the morning we left Lake Itasca. Almost silently we propelled the canoe, heading into mid-stream, just as night was replaced by opalescent

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

hues of dawn, and the sun prepared to peep over the flat eastern horizon.

It was a dynamic morning. In the soft, cool air of the lower river, we paddled easily, outwardly as complacent as though we were two grandees in our galleons, returning with holds filled with gold. Inwardly I was fearful, apprehensive. Suppose the canoe should spring a leak, or Allen become sick, or a storm blow us down the wrong channel or a dozen other things. It was within my mind not that anything might happen to me, just that something might suddenly end the trip within sight of the goal. I was in tremendous joy over the completion of the journey, yet fearful that something still might happen. Just as we headed across The Spread, the sun, refulgent, appeared, tinting the waters nameless hues.

The river remained like glass. Out on The Spread, we could look down the three passes, Pass a L'Outre on our left, closed to navigation for all but boats of shallow draft: Southwest Pass on our right, which carried about half of the waters of the river down a channel one-fourth of a mile wide, and ahead of us, South Pass, main steamship route to the Gulf and our River's End.

South Pass is almost uniformly seven hundred feet wide and fourteen miles long. Once inside of it we feared no disaster unless from one of the monsters of which La Salle was warned, so large they could devour a canoe and contents in one gulp. We did not see any alligators on the journey save at Audubon Park. Nor did we meet any ferocious half-reptile, half-fish gar-pike which the pilots said were as bad as sword fish. But two miles down South Pass we nearly jumped out of the canoe when a goat stuck its head out of the green rushes, looked at us in amazement and laughed as only a bearded, erudite goat can laugh. In South Pass, we were in a huge ship canal. The banks were low, fringed with willows, grasses, waving in the wind.

Southwest Pass is about twenty miles long, and carries an enormous amount of water, but only in recent years, since adopting the engineering principles applied to South Pass by Eads, has it had enough water at the mouth for deep draft vessels.

---

## THE EADS JETTIES

---

"Bound for the Balize" is an expression that grew up as the result of a little village built at the mouth of Pass a L'Outre, French for "Pass to the Outside," which was in earliest times the most important mouth. The village on stilts which was built at the mouth was called the Balize: it had a blockhouse and pilot station. The expression "Bound for the Balize" meant that a craft was bound for open water. During the first half of the nineteenth century Pass a L'Outre shoaled, and Southwest Pass deepened. Until 1877 practically all of the ships entering or leaving the Mississippi went over the bar at the mouth of Southwest Pass. Fleet clipper ships, with sharp bottoms and keels projecting were then the principal cotton carriers. Ofttimes they were loaded until they drew eighteen feet: almost never was there more than sixteen feet over the bar. Aided by tugs, the vessels would run at the bar, and get through if they struck a soft spot. If not, it required two or three tides to get through, and in many instances weeks were spent trying to get across this narrow strip of sand and mud into deep water.

Despite the fact that many ships sought other ports, cotton brought by packets drew tremendous trade to New Orleans. In February 1859, New Orleans exported merchandise valued at \$5,367,339. In 1859 at one time fifty-two ships were held up on the bar. Between 1872 and 1877, four hundred and seventeen vessels were aground off Southwest Pass.

Just inside of South Pass we answered a hail from men at the Head of Passes government station, and stopped while they served coffee. Two miles farther we stopped at a settler's dock, and gave his family several things we no longer needed.

Until 1879 New Orleans suffered economically because of the bars at the mouths. In 1879 Captain James B. Eads completed the jetties he had begun four years before, based on suggestions of French engineers of about 1720. They deepened the channel from fifteen feet to more than thirty feet. Jetties are artificial extensions of the natural banks of the stream: as the bed of the river is prolonged by silt filling in from above, the jetties must keep pace with the extension.

Construction was somewhat like that of the jetties at the Sulina Pass of the Danube, greatly modified to meet the pecu-

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

liar needs of the Mississippi. They were made of willows woven along ways built on the site, sunk by rubble stone. More mats were sunk on top of these: this continued until the whole formation was sunk into silt. Thus a stable foundation rose above water level. Then a stone wall was built along the channel line.

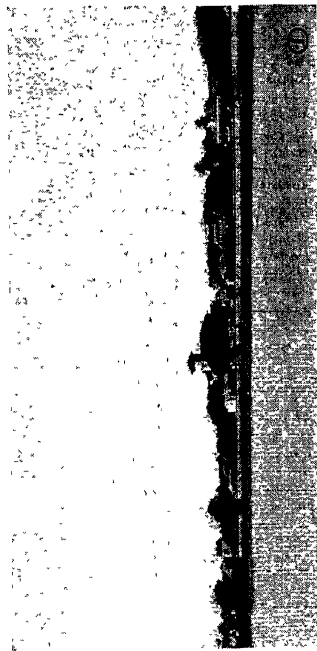
Since 1900 there have been few interruptions of the thirty-foot channel over the bar. Always there has been sufficient depth to permit vessels of twenty-six to twenty-eight foot draft to enter or leave South Pass. Congress has appropriated money to construct similar works down Southwest Pass, and New Orleans now has two routes to salt water, one of which always is open to vessels of thirty-foot draft and even deeper.

We arrived at Port Eads about mid-morning after easy paddling, and climbed South Pass light to a point one hundred and eight feet above the level of the ground. Here we saw one of the most marvellous views of the trip. Behind Port Eads, with its row of white houses and wooden walks, was Garden Island Bay and the Gulf, sparkling and alive. Two miles down-river was the end of the jetties and journey. To the west was Whale Bay, and, behind that, the Gulf. Northward we saw through our glasses beyond the Head of Passes. South Pass, a tenuous channel, threaded its way toward us between two slender walls of rock and dirt.

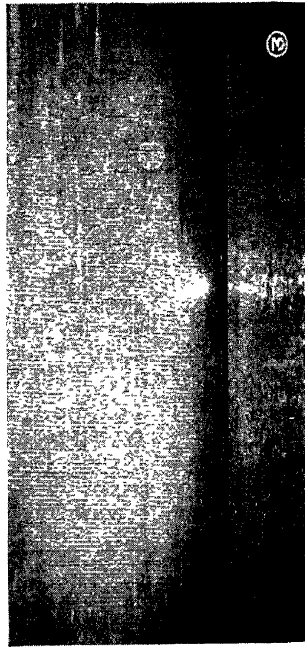
When the trip was planned, we had believed Port Eads the ultimate end of the Mississippi, but learned there were two more miles. We knew that if we did not complete the remaining distance, somebody would say that we had not paddled the entire length of the river. Besides, the billowing Gulf beckoned to us. So we embarked for the last time of the journey at Port Eads. Practically all of the population was down to see us.

"Well," one man remarked, as we pushed away from the dock, "I've seen many of 'em, but I never before met two quite nutty enough to go paddling around the Gulf in an egg shell."

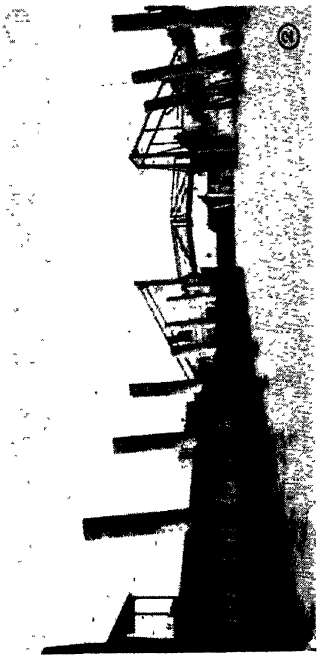
At noon we passed the Lower Pilot Station, where the bar pilots stay when they are going out to bring in vessels. They board the outgoing boats at Pilot Town and go out with them, and are brought back to the Lower Pilot Station by the *Jennie Wilson*, the oldest steam tug in existence. The pilots were on



(1) Pointe a la Hache showing above the low levee, the little parish seat of Plaquemines parish.



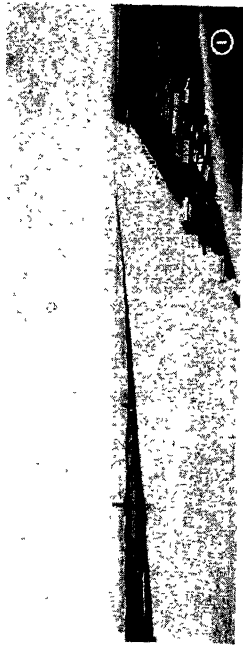
(2) Pilot Town, just above Head of Passes, September 15, 1925, the last day of the journey. The picture was taken before six o'clock, just as the sun appeared over the low eastern horizon.



(3) Doullut's Canal, one of a score opening off the Mississippi below New Orleans, through which come oyster luggers and boats with shrimp, fish and other seafood.



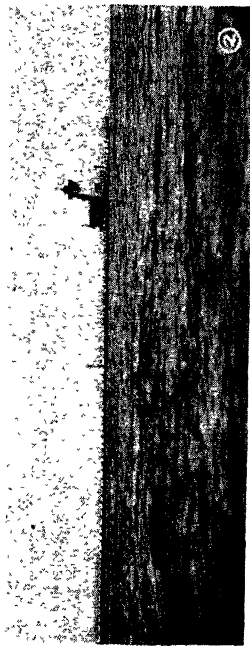
(4) Pilot Town, looking upriver, a row of houses on stilts, the homes of the pilots, the men who guide those who go "Down to the Sea in Ships."



(1) Looking downriver from the lighthouse at Port Eads, showing part of the village on both sides of South Pass and the Gulf behind the two narrow banks of land, extending toward the mouth.



(3) The John D. Archibald, a Standard Oil tanker, stuck on the bar off the mouth of South Pass, September 15. This picture was taken out on the Gulf, and the low fringe of the jetties may be seen behind the vessel.



(2) Nearing the end of South Pass and one of the mouths of the Mississippi River, in our quest to learn "Where Goes the River." Beyond the lighthouse is the Gulf of Mexico.



(4) The Jennie Wilson, the oldest steam tug in existence, heading upstream in South Pass from the Lower Pilot Station, with The Charles H. Curley of St. Paul, the journey over, the canoe homeward bound.

---

## OUT ONTO THE GULF

---

the dock to welcome us, but we went paddling right by. Now, this close, we were going beyond the end of the jetties to taste salt water and ride the blue green combers of the Mexican Gulf. Even shouts of "Dinner" did not stop us. Two hundred yards below the Lower Pilot Station, we passed beyond the jetties and the light house, through the mouth of the Mississippi. River's End! We had completed the journey, at high noon September 15.

Out on the Gulf of Mexico we were, 2,500 miles from the source of the stream of the continent. What a world of romance fable, fact and dreams are woven about it! What visions are linked with it! What hopes have been attained because of it, what aspirations frustrated by it! Pelicans wheeled above us, large ugly birds, with paunchlike bills, clumsy wings, and apologetic manner. We met the swells of the southern sea and rode on its sparkling surface, the canoe high in the water, buoyant as our spirits, light as our hearts and heads, filled as they were with joy of achievement.

There are some, no doubt the same Irish who believe in banshees and ghosts, who maintain that Hibernian missionaries visited the Gulf of Mexico in the middle of the sixth century. Some also believe that Welsh or Modoc immigrants discovered North America via the Mexican Gulf in 1170, and that both of these legendary expeditions visited the Mississippi mouth. These fictions may be remembered only as interesting conjecture. Actual discovery came within a few years after the papal bull of May 4, 1493, in which Pope Alexander VI, Vice-regent of the Creator of Land and Sea, generously disposed of not only a continent that did not belong to him and to which he had no right whatever, but gave away half a world with reckless liberality unparalleled even by Congressional appropriations, to curry the favor of the monarchs of Spain and Portugal. This papal bull greatly stimulated exploration in the new lands, by the English, who did not recognize this authority, as well as by Spanish and Portuguese sea-dogs.

Some historians try to invest Americus Vespuccius, who was absent from Spain during most of 1497 and 1498, with the glory of having first seen the Mississippi mouth. Others try to credit



---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

this to Columbus, maintaining that the "Admiral's Map," a product of the voyage of 1502, is enough to give credence to the belief. This map, published in 1513, and always the subject of much speculation, shows the Florida coast, and, far to the west, a three-pronged delta of a river. Alonzo Alvarez de Pineda has partisans. There is no reason for believing that these gallant sailor explorers, or any others, saw the mouth of the Mississippi until Panfilo de Narvaez and his party did in 1529, or late in 1528. Even this group of seamen did not enter the mouth, for a wind blew them out into the Gulf and wrecked some of the boats.

Here once more the figure of La Salle passes our path, the first to follow the river to the mouth, which he reached April 9, 1682. He had braved all kinds of weather: heat and sickness; the unknown, fearful river; Indians, he had fought and conquered some, won others for friends. No rainbow ever lured a traveler with more siren call than this tawny sinew of the gods, which binds together a continent. Here he erected a post on which he inscribed: "*Louis le Grand, Roi de France et de Navarre, Regne; Le Neuvieme Avril, 1682.*" Thus was claimed for France by Sieur de La Salle, the most fascinating figure in the history of American discovery, the greatest empire in lands in the history of the world.

We gazed across the Gulf, miles upon miles, the waters falling gently and rising with a swell that was eternal life. We felt akin to La Salle and Tonty; we felt as though we knew Iberville and Bienville. We felt in touch with scores of doughty captains who had brought their ships up and down this river and sailed these seas. We felt a relationship with thousands of sailor lads who had entered or left this pass, surging with youthful adventure. We felt as though we, too, knew some of the joys of discovery and of pioneering.

Thousands of *voyageurs* since La Salle have paddled against these mighty currents. We were more fortunate. The *Jennie Wilson* and the *Sipsey* of the W. G. Coyle Warehouse, took our canoe and outfit back to New Orleans. Through the kindness of the pilot, Captain J. G. Wilson, and Captain William Day, master of *El Capitan* of the Southern Pacific Railroad owned Morgan Line, the next day we rode to New Orleans

---

## WE NEARLY RUIN OUR RECORD

---

in state, viewing from the bridge scenes of mosquitoes, struggles and hospitality.

Riding the salty waves, what lay before us? Anything might, beyond the Gulf. The possibility of strange life in strange lands, adventure, experience, was as pleasant a romance as any dreams in the dark of night. Here we were 1,100 miles from Baltimore by water, 1,500 from Boston, 12,000 miles from Bombay, 6,200 from Buenos Aires, 11,000 from Hong Kong. It was 4,500 miles to Liverpool, 11,000 to Manila, 14,000 to Melbourne, 7,500 to Nome, 12,500 to Singapore and 4,700 miles to San Francisco. There was lure! There was witchery!

It would have been easy enough to keep going, heading into the swell directly, on and on around the world. But Allen reminded me of dinner, and we could not go without food. At St. Louis the seats of the canoe needed recaning. The time and expense entailed more than we considered worth while. So we bought two grass mats for five cents apiece and used them the rest of the way. These we hurled at the pelicans and started back. But when we attempted to turn, and make our way to the Lower Pilot Station, it was a different matter. We set out on this trip for adventure, and here adventure nearly got us. The waves were long and rolling, but the swells also were deep and steep. We succeeded in turning about, and were just starting into the pass after furious paddling against the strong currents, when *Jennie Wilson* went past, throwing up a wash such as only a tug can kick up. Close behind it came the large Japanese freighter *Mexico Maru*. Caught between the wash and counter waves of the two vessels, in the narrow space between them and the jetties, we were nearly capsized less than two hundred yards from the end. But Lady Luck, smiling over our left shoulder, was with us to the end, and we battled the swishing, swashing white caps successfully and completed the 2,500 miles without upsetting.

About October 1 an old friend of our family who had been out of town telephoned my mother to ask how far we were on the trip. Mother informed her that we had finished September 15. "Oh dear," the friend lamented, "I've been praying for them two weeks too long."

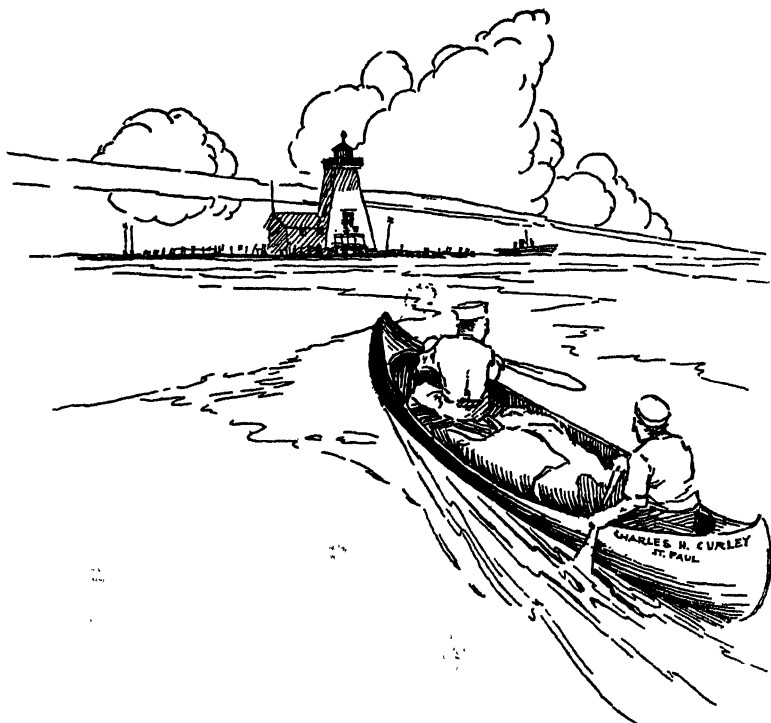
---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

The pilots had waited dinner for us, and we at once stilled the gnawings of the inner man. After the meal was over and we finally were left to ourselves for a time, we went out to the end of the dock, from where we could look up South Pass and down to the end of the jetties onto the Gulf of Mexico.

Suddenly Allen looked at me, examined me closely, and exclaimed, "Pudge, your nose is peeling again."



*" . . . . We passed beyond the jetties and the light house, through the mouth of the Mississippi."*

It was not enough that, with the aid of my three loyal companions, I was now the only living person who had traversed the entire Mississippi River by canoe. It was not enough that *The Charles H. Curley of St. Paul* should be the only canoe ever to make the entire journey. It was not enough that we had made this trip down the valley during the worst heat wave

---

## THE QUESTION IS ANSWERED

---

it had known in fifty years. More than that, I had had another record thrust upon me. For the twenty-third time my nose was peeling. Other records may be shattered daily, but that is one that ought to stand for years. I, for one, will never attempt to better it over a twenty-five hundred mile course.

We sat on the edge of the dock, letting our feet dangle, as we watched the flood flowing by, listening to the sounds of the stream, and as we looked and listened, it seemed that we realized at last the meaning, the spirit, the purpose of the mighty Mississippi.

It is the river of the world, the river of Democracy. Out of the travail and conflict of generations it has become the spirit of the nation. It is the embodiment of our fears and cherished dreams. It is the dynamo which constantly is using the energy of the people and recharging them with power. It is the heart of the land, the arteries, eyes, arms, and thighs of the nation. Its rumble in flood is like the call of a thousand demons, its whisper the promise of success in things yet undreamed. The river of the world, it is given to this nation that we may use it for the betterment of mankind. The river of Democracy, it is not meant that we shall be content with oppression elsewhere. Its course is through sovereign states in a mighty republic, one that will be poverty-stricken in the annals of history unless through our strength, through our wealth, through our power, part of which is made possible by this waterway, we help other nations, render assistance to the weak, counsel to the strong.

It is the river of the world, given to America not for abuse or neglect, but to work and be worked, to produce, create, not only things material, wealth, gold, but to stimulate ideals, hopes, loves, life. In its fierce power, its ruthlessness, its intense beauty, its laughing windings far to the north, its deep-voiced roars on the lower stretches, its changes, versatility, voluptuous love of living, it is all that is best or worst in these United States. It is more American than any other thing or person or force or feature of the land.

The waters of this stream are gathered by the sun and wafted on the winds of the skies to the far corners of the earth. If people listen carefully they may hear its message, the mes-

---

## WHERE GOES THE RIVER

---

sage of America, sometimes weak in its strength, sometimes charitable in its greed, but always vibrant with the joy of being, always keenly aware of the beauties of the present.

Out into the salty waves, carried on the Gulf stream through all oceans, go the waters of this river. Ships that ply the deep, birds that wing the air, clouds that carry the rain, take messages of faith and hope and peace and prosperity to people not yet freed, hearts not yet lightened, souls not yet unburdened, from this mighty river. A free stream seeking the free seas, this Mississippi goes out into the Gulf of Mexico, the pledge of America to all nations, of the new world to the old, of God to mankind.

So, after years of dreaming and wondering, after months of following its meandering miles, we learned at last from the mighty Mississippi, from the unconquerable and incomparable Father of Waters, "Where Goes The River."





